BELORUSSIA 1944

The Soviet General Staff Study

Translated and edited by

DAVID M. GLANTZ AND
HAROLD S. ORENSTEIN

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LONDON • NEW YORK

First published in 2001 by Frank Cass Publishers

Simultaneously printed in the USA and Canada by Frank Cass 29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

First published in paperback 2004

Frank Cass is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group
This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.
"To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge's collection of thousands of eBooks please go to http://www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk/."

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-203-30920-0 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-7146-5102-8 (hbk)
ISBN 0-415-35116-2 (pbk)

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Editor's Foreword

The Soviet Army's Belorussian operation in the summer of 1944 was unprecedented in terms of its scale, scope, and strategic consequences. At Moscow in late 1941 and early 1942 the Soviet Army contained a German strategic offensive, but failed to inflict significant damage on a German Army Group and lost the strategic initiative within a matter of months. At Stalingrad in late 1942 and early 1943, the Soviet Army once again blunted a German strategic offensive, destroying a German army and several allied armies in the process, and launched a strategic offensive of their own throughout the winter. Nevertheless, in the spring of 1943, the Germans were able to contain the Soviet thrust, regain the initiative in southern Russia, and launch yet another strategic offensive at Kursk in July.

The struggle at Kursk, with its ambitious German offensive and massive Soviet counteroffensive, was indeed spectacular in its scope and consequences. But although German forces were propelled backward to the line of the Dnepr River, no German armies fell victim to Soviet encirclement and destruction. Moreover, the Soviet advance stalled in central Russia and slowed temporarily in the south. During the ensuing winter, the Soviet Army conducted a series of successful consecutive operations in the Ukraine, which liberated the bulk of the republic from German control. On at least one occasion during these operations, large German forces were encircled, but only on a corps and multi-corps scale. These operations set the stage for what was about to occur in Belorussia.

For the first time in the war, the Soviet *Stavka* (High Command) planned for a summer campaign consisting of a series of massive and consecutive strategic operations spanning the entire Soviet-German front. It planned to initiate the summer campaign against its old nemesis, German Army Group Center, which was defending in Belorussia, and then extend the campaign with ambitious offensives against virtually every German army group on the front. Soviet success in the campaign depended on its success in Belorussia.

Soviet planners chose 23 June 1944 as the start date for its Belorussian offensive, in part, to exploit German discomfiture in France (Normandy) and, in part, to assist Allied efforts in western Europe. More important still was the Soviet realization that victory in Belorussia would liberate the last major Soviet republic under German control and would propel Soviet forces to the East Prussian and Polish borders along the critical Moscow-Minsk-Warsaw-Berlin axis. Once the Belorussian operation was completed, the battle for German territory could begin.

The Soviet conducted the Belorussian operation with four powerful *fronts* operating under close *Stavka* control. Over 1.8 million troops, 1.2 million of them in combat formations, sought to accomplish a feat of arms no previous Soviet force had achieved, the defeat and dismemberment of an entire German army group. This study details how that feat was accomplished in the words of those individuals who planned and orchestrated the operation.

This book is an unexpurgated translation of the Soviet General Staff Study No. 18, published under the rubric of ‘war experiences’ and originally classified ‘Secret’. Prepared to educate Soviet commanders and staff officers, it is the most scholarly and detailed examination of the operation that has appeared to date. While many other books have covered the operation, none has done so as thoroughly from the Soviet perspective. As expected in such an account, the study focuses on Red Army operations and avoids mention of such controversial topics as Red Army combat losses and the real strength and condition of defending German forces. It also reflects the political context in which it was written by including ritualistic statements praising Comrade Stalin’s brilliant military genius and the role of the Party in the achievement of victory. Sadly, no maps accompanied the original of this study. Therefore, I have added a series of maps to this volume in the form of a map supplement. These maps include terrain maps, which are vital to following the detailed action, and daily operational maps, which permit the reader to understand the general flow of the operation. Given the intent of the study, readers have been provided with enough detail to study the operation in addition to reading it for ‘pleasure’.

The editor’s appendices are as follows:

1. Soviet order of battle, and unit and formation command cadre, 23 June 1944
2. Soviet personnel losses during the Belorussian operation
3. Maps

DAVID M.GLANTZ

Unlike previous ones, this collection covers a single operational-strategic theme, ‘The destruction of German forces in Belorussia in the summer of 1944’.

This study has been prepared by a group of officers under the supervision and editorship of *Lieutenant-General, Professor, and Doctor of Military Science E.A.Shilovsky* and comprising *Colonel N.G.Pavlenko, Colonel S. N.Shishkin, Colonel N.S.Klimov,* and *Colonel P.S.Boldyrev.* During its preparation, the work has made use of materials from the Red

Army General Staff, the Central Directorate of the NKO [People’s Commissariat of Defense], and the headquarters of *fronts*, armies, and some corps.

Army General I.Kh.Bagramian, Colonel-General A.N.Bogoliubov, Colonel-General M.S.Malinin, Major-General V.F.Mernov, Major-General G.M.Chumakov, and *Colonel I.M.Petushkov* took part in the editing of this study.

Directorate for the Exploitation of War Experience of the Red Army General Staff

Introduction

The territory of Belorussia has been a theater of military operations many times in past wars (for example, in 1812, 1915–17, and 1918–20). It was also an arena of active operations from 1941–43 during the Great Patriotic War. Red Army operations on the Belorussian strategic axis in the summer of 1944, however, surpassed all previous operations in terms of scope, tempos, and in the quantity of participating forces and combat equipment.

The Red Army's decisive success in 1944 and the expulsion of the enemy from the confines of the Soviet Union were conditioned by a number of shattering blows delivered by the Red Army against the German-fascist forces and the forces of the vassals of Hitler's Germany.

One of the most important was the fifth blow executed by the Red Army in Belorussia in the summer of 1944. Here, Soviet forces won an outstanding victory of great strategic import: German Army Group Center, consisting of three armies, was defeated, and it became possible for our forces to advance to a great depth.

In a speech dated 6 November 1944, Comrade Stalin defined the significance of this outstanding operation as follows:

> The fifth blow was inflicted on the Germans in June-July of this year, when the Red Army utterly defeated German forces at Vitebsk, Bobruisk, and Mogilev, and completed this blow with the encirclement of 30 German divisions at Minsk. As a result of this blow, our forces completely liberated the Belorussian Soviet Republic; reached the Vistula and liberated a considerable portion of Poland, our ally; reached the Neman and liberated a large part of the Lithuanian Soviet Republic; and forced the Neman and reached the German border.

The Belorussian operation, conducted by the Red Army in the summer of 1944 by means of close cooperation among four *fronts,* clearly demonstrates the following to us:

- the further development of the Red Army's military art, which enabled the Army to execute such a swift and complex operation;
- an increase in the technical outfitting of Soviet forces, which now possessed superiority in artillery, tanks, and aviation;
- the Red Army's high morale; and
- the superiority of Stalin's military art over German strategy and tactics.

By virtue of the depth and boldness of the plan, the careful preparation, the scope of operations, and the expertise in its execution, the Belorussian operation is one of the classic modern operations.

We see in this outstanding operation the Red Army's enormous offensive might that overcame powerful fortifications and swiftly defeated the German forces. This might was in harmony with the high maneuverability of our formations, despite the fact that battles often took place on unfavorable terrain. In this operation we find highly instructive examples of all fundamental types of offensive operations, including the penetration of a fortified front, the forcing of river positions, the encirclement and destruction of enemy groupings, and continuous pursuit of the remnants of defeated enemy forces to a great depth.

This work is not an exhaustive description of the Red Army's summer 1944 operations in Belorussia. It is basically an operational-strategic study, which examines the most important questions regarding the conduct of an offensive and cooperation among four fronts on the Belorussian strategic axis, in general, and with respect to specific results.

Lieutenant-General E.A.Shilovsky, Chief Editor

1
The Situation in Belorussia at the Beginning of June 1944

Plan of the Red Army's Belorussian Operation

As a result of the Red Army's brilliant victories during the winter campaign of 1943–44, Soviet forces advanced along the entire length of the Soviet-German front from the Gulf of Finland to the Black Sea. The advance was especially great in the south. By the summer of 1944, the front-line ran in the general direction from Narva to Pskov and further south; near Polotsk it turned to the southeast, skirted Vitebsk, proceeded east of Orsha and Mogilev, then turned to the southwest to Zhlobin and Mozyr, and continued further westward to Kovel'. At Kovel' the front-line turned sharply south, ran west of Chernovitsy, and proceeded further southeast to the lower course of the Dnestr (see Map 1 in the map supplement).

Thus, two vast salients were formed, as it were, on the Soviet-German front: one in the Ukraine, south of the Pripiat' River, where our forces had advanced deeply; and the second in Belorussia, north of the Pripiat', where German forces were holding a front-line that was jutting into our disposition.

The operational initiative belonged to the Soviet forces, and the Red Army command was free to choose the axes for its attacks. The German command was forced to shift to a defensive strategy on the Soviet-German front, and counted on prolonging the war, so as to delay in every way possible the ultimate defeat of the German-fascist forces.

In its proposals for military operations in the summer of 1944, the German High Command considered it most likely that the Red Army would deliver its main attack in the south. It expected only secondary, local operations of a holding nature in Belorussia, and the Germans anticipated repelling these by employing available forces from Army Group Center within the bounds of the main defensive belt.

The Germans considered that the front in Belorussia had been stabilized. Of the 22 panzer (tank) divisions that they possessed in the east, 20 were deployed south of Pripiat' and only two were to its north.

This time too, the Hitlerite command was mistaken.

Discussions held in the *Stavka* of the Red Army's Supreme High Command concerning the operational-strategic situation on the front in the summer of 1944 recognized that it would be expedient first to eliminate the enemy's Belorussian salient and defeat his forces in the Vitebsk, Orsha, Bobruisk, and Minsk region. Unless this was done, an offensive in the Ukraine could not be guaranteed.

The defeat of German Army Group Center in Belorussia and the liberation of Belorussian territory (across which ran the shortest and most important routes to Germany's largest political administrative centers) had great strategic and political significance. The situation in the entire theater of war would fundamentally change to our

benefit. In addition, a successful offensive in Belorussia would best ensure our subsequent offensive operations in the Ukraine and Poland.

The situation of the two sides in Belorussia by 1 June 1944 is shown on Map 2. The 1st Baltic Front's forces, consisting of three armies (the 6th Guards, 4th Shock, and 43d) were in the north in a terrain sector between the Nevel', Idritsa line and the Velizh, Vitebsk line. The 3d Belorussian Front's three armies (the 39th, 5th, and 31st) were deployed on the Vitebsk and Orsha axes. The 2d Belorussian Front's forces, also including three armies (the 33d, 49th, and 50th), were grouped on the Mogilev axis in the center. The 1st Belorussian Front's forces were operating to the south along a vast front running past Rogachev and Zhlobin to the mouth of the Ptich River, and further west along the Pripiat' River to Kovel'; its 3d, 48th, and 65th Armies were located north of the Pripiat' River.

German Army Group Center's forces (the Ninth, Fourth, and Third Panzer Armies) and a portion (in the north) of the German Sixteenth Army's forces, which had become part of Army Group North, opposed them in the terrain sector north of the Pripiat' River.

By the commencement of our offensive, the enemy had occupied a prepared and well-organized defense. The Third Panzer Army was located along the Vitebsk axis, the German Fourth Army's divisions were grouped on the Orsha and Mogilev axes, and the Ninth Army was covering the Bobruisk axis. The Second Army's front ran further along the Pripiat' River. The enemy defense was anchored on a well-developed system of trench-type field fortifications, exploiting natural lines. The depth and outfitting of the defensive belts varied depending on the importance of the axis and the nature of the terrain.

In Army Group Center's belt, the German command had begun the construction of defensive positions in 1942–43. The current front-line, with its developed system of fortifications, took its final form during stubborn battles during the spring of 1944.

The German Eastern Front's Army Group Center, under the command of General-Field Marshal Busch, was assigned the mission of protecting the crucial East Prussian and Warsaw axes. Army Group Center's main defensive line was an arc, whose convex side was turned to the east (the 'Belorussian balcony', as the Germans called it). The northern end of this arc was in Polotsk and Vitebsk, while its southern end was in the Pripiat' River basin. During the first half of March 1944, Hitler ordered the creation of fortified regions at the most important centers along these routes to hold off the Soviet offensive. Thus, Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev, and Bobruisk were declared fortified regions.

Work was also carried out in rear areas to construct defensive positions along the Dnepr, Drut', and Berezina Rivers, along the Minsk, Slutsk line, and further to the west. However, these rear positions had not been completed by the commencement of our offensive.

Simultaneously with engineering measures to fortify the front-line, the Germans regrouped their forces to cover the most important axes, that is, Polotsk, Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev, and Bobruisk. The German command focused serious attention on replenishing their operating formations with men and equipment, striving to bring them up to authorized strength. The enemy succeeded in accomplishing this to a considerable degree. Manning and refitting also concerned tank and assault units, artillery units of the Reserve of the High Command, and other combat arms. The operational density on Army Group Center's defensive front amounted to 14 kilometers of frontage per division. On

average, there were 450 men, 32 machine-guns, ten guns and mortars, and one tank and assault gun per kilometer in the first line. These data, however, are only orientational in nature. In fact, the defense varied in strength in different sectors, depending on their importance. Thus, for example, along the Orsha and Rogachev-Bobruisk axes the defense was well developed and saturated with forces. Here the tactical density was high. In a number of other sectors, which the Germans considered less important, the defense was structured along an extensive front and was characterized by a lower troop density.

By the beginning of June 1944, the German force grouping with respect to armies and principal operational axes was as follows:

(a) The *Third Panzer Army* was defending a 150-km front along a line from east of Polotsk to Bogushevsk (40 kilometers south of Vitebsk).

The army consisted of ten divisions (the 24th, 252d, 56th, 246th, 206th, 197th, 299th, and 256th Infantry Divisions, and the 4th and 6th Luftwaffe Field Divisions), twelve separately operating regiments (security, police, etc.), and several assault-gun brigades.

All of these divisions, as well as two regiments (a regiment of the 201st Security Division and the 'Copenhagen' Regiment) were defending in the first line.

There were ten separate regiments in the army reserve, mainly operating against partisans and securing army lines of communications.

The Third Army's principal force grouping was located in the Vitebsk region.

The overall strength of this army's forces on 22 June 1944 was 165,450 men, 1,345 field guns, 680 antiaircraft guns, 80 tanks, and 80 assault guns.

(b) The *Fourth Army* was defending a 225-km wide sector extending from (but excluding) Bogushevsk to Bykhov.

This army consisted of ten divisions, of which eight were infantry (the 78th, 260th, 57th, 110th, 337th, 12th, 31st, and 267th), and two were motorized (the 25th and 18th). In addition, it had eight separately operating regiments of varied designation, and several assault-gun brigades.

There were eight separately operating regiments in the army reserve, used simultaneously to fight against partisans and to protect army rear areas and lines of communications.

The Orsha and Mogilev axes were most solidly protected.

By 22 June, the army consisted of 168,320 men, 1,376 field guns, 320 antiaircraft guns, 130 tanks, and 246 assault guns.

(c) The *Ninth Army* was defending in a 220-km wide sector extending from south of Bykhov to the Pripiat' River. It consisted of 11 divisions, of which ten were infantry (the 134th, 296th, 6th, 383d, 45th, 36th, 35th, 129th, 292d, and 102d) and one was security (the 707th). In addition, it had three separately operating regiments and nine security, construction, and combat engineer [sapper] battalions.

All infantry divisions, the security division, the separate 'Brandenburg' Regiment, and the nine security, construction, and sapper battalions were defending in the first line.

Two separately operating regiments were in the army reserve.

The principal force grouping was created on the Bobruisk axis.

By the beginning of our offensive, the army consisted of 175,730 men, 1,630 field guns, 600 antiaircraft guns, 80 tanks, and 60 assault guns.

In addition, the following reserves were deployed behind the German front-line and in front of our forces operating north of the Pripiat' River: the 14th and 95th Infantry

Divisions, the 60th Panzer Grenadier Division [termed by the Soviets 'motorized'], the 20th Panzer Division, six security divisions, two training-field divisions, and two reserve divisions.

The overall combat and numerical strength of Army Group Center's forces on 22 June 1944 (taking into account the Second German Army, which was deployed along the Pripiat' River and on the Kovel' axis) was 1,036,760 men, 7,760 field guns, 2,320 antiaircraft guns, 800 tanks, 530 assault guns, and 1,000–1,300 airplanes.

Operational initiative, the favorable relief of the front-line of Soviet forces in Belorussia, and the ability to concentrate large forces and means here created favorable conditions for delivering deep, concentric blows against the German dispositions in the general direction of Minsk. If the offensive was successful, it could lead to a splintering of enemy forces and their encirclement and defeat unit by unit.

The *Stavka*'s operational plan envisioned the delivery of main attacks on both of our flanks: in the north by the 3d Belorussian Front and the 1st Baltic Front's left wing to destroy the German Vitebsk-Orsha-Lepel' grouping; and in the south by the 1st Belorussian Front's right wing to defeat the enemy's Bobruisk grouping. In the center, the 2d Belorussian Front was to conduct a secondary offensive along the Mogilev axis (see Map 3).

After destroying the German Vitebsk-Orsha-Lepel' grouping, the 1st Baltic Front was to advance with its main forces in the direction of Lepel' and S'ventsiany, supporting from the north our forces advancing toward Minsk. The 3d Belorussian Front was to develop its main attack on Minsk and its right flank was to advance toward Molodechno. After destroying the Bobruisk grouping, the 1st Belorussian Front's right-wing main forces were to reach the Pukhovichi, Osipovichi, and Slutsk region, keeping in mind a subsequent advance toward Minsk, while part of the forces were to reach Baranovichi. Operating in the center, the 2d Belorussian Front was to defeat the German Mogilev grouping and reach the Berezina River. A subsequent offensive toward Smilovichi and Minsk was planned.

Thus, the general operational plan envisioned the conduct of a large strategic operation involving the close cooperation of four *fronts*, with the aim of destroying German Army Group Center's main forces in Belorussia and liberating Minsk, the capital of the Belorussian SSR. During the first stage of the offensive, [we] planned to smash the enemy defense on six axes, encircle and destroy his groupings on the flanks (at Vitebsk and Bobruisk), and penetrate his front in the center (along the Bogushevsk, Orsha, and Mogilev axes). During the second stage, our forces were to exploit achieved success quickly, pursue the enemy along the entire front, and, while overwhelming his central grouping on the Mogilev-Minsk axis with our wings, encircle and destroy it. The most important mission of the third stage of the operation was untiring pursuit of the remnants of the defeated enemy forces to our western borders.

The operational plan of the Red Army's Supreme High Command established decisive aims for destroying the Germans in Belorussia, envisioning a splintering of their front and the encirclement and destruction of enemy forces piecemeal. The plan was wisely thought out, carefully worked out, and well supported in all respects.

In accordance with this plan, preparations were carried out for the great summer offensive in Belorussia.

MILITARY-GEOGRAPHIC FEATURES OF AREA OF OPERATIONS (SEE MAPS 4–16)

Force operations along the Belorussian strategic axis in June-July 1944 developed in a vast region whose borders were as follows: in the north, the pre-arranged Nevel', Dvinsk (Daugavpils), and Shauliai line; in the south, the Gomel', Mozyr', Pripiat' River, and Brest line; in the east, the Nevel', Smolensk, and Gomel' line; and in the west, the Shauliai, Kaunas, Belostok, and Brest line. This terrain belt, which extends 450–550 kilometers from east to west and 400–450 kilometers from north to south, basically encompassed the territory of the Belorussian SSR and a considerable portion of the Lithuanian SSR.

The military-strategic significance of this region was conditioned, first and foremost, by the fact that the principal routes from Moscow and Smolensk to Poland's and Germany's most important industrial and political-administrative centers—Warsaw and Berlin—and to Germany's food bases—East Prussia and Pomerania—ran through this area. Capturing this region would have an exceptionally great effect on the outcome of the war.

The region's surface was a vast plain cut by many rivers and lakes, and covered, to a large degree, by forests. It included a number of elevations with gentle slopes, as well as low-lying expanses, the latter mainly located along river valleys and having, in large part, a wooded and swampy character. The largest of these, the Poles'e Lowlands, covered the region's entire southern part.

Elevations in the Belorussian theater consisted of low hills or plateaux with modest absolute and relative height and gentle slopes. These elevations not only failed to complicate movement and troop operations but even facilitated them. The most developed network of routes with the best roads was here, and soil properties (loamy or sandy-metalled) were such that even after heavy rains the roads dried quickly and became completely trafficable. In general, the elevated regions were favorable for troop maneuver and the conduct of operations by large formations using great masses of equipment.

Of the region's elevated areas, the Belorussian Ridge, which bordered Poles'e to the north, was the largest and most important. This ridge was a continuation of the Smolensk-Moscow Hills, and extended from Orsha through Minsk and Baranovichi to Grodno. It served as a watershed for the large rivers flowing into the Baltic and Black Seas.

The broad valleys of the upper rivers divided the ridge into a series of hills with their own names: the Katarsy Mountains (in the Lepel' region), the Minsk Hills, the Novogrudok Heights, the Volkovysk Heights, and the Grodno Heights. The Oshmiany Hills ran from the Belorussian Ridge to Vilnius in the Minsk region, and the Nesvizh Heights stretched between the towns of Slutsk and Baranovichi. The highest elevations were in the range of 200–300 meters.

As already mentioned, the relief of these elevations consisted of low, circular hills and spurs; broad, flat depressions; and broad upper-river valleys. The Grodno, Volkovysk, and Novogrudok Heights were the most hilly and cut the most with ravines and rivers. Here, however, the sectors that were considerably cut with steep slopes did not extend very far, and were not a continuous obstacle, but more like a mass of boulders.

The relief of the Minsk and Oshmiany Hills was rolling, with gentle slopes and fewer ravines. Unstratified sand with small stones was deposited in loamy soil, while in places boulders could be encountered.

The river valleys emerging from the Belorussian Ridge were, for the most part, uniform plains with very minor gradients. The river's banks were predominantly low and swampy. Ground water was close to the surface.

The least convenient regions for conducting large-scale offensive operations were the lowlands, encountered throughout the entire theater, especially in the southern part. The following lowlands having more importance could be noted in the north-south direction.

The Polotsk Lowland, which was formed by the Drissa and Obol' River valleys, occupied an area of 50×75 kilometers. A forest and shrubbery covered this lowland, and part of it was swampy and intersected by a large number of lakes.

West of the Polotsk Lowland was the Disna River Lowland. This terrain sector, directly adjacent to the river itself, was more convenient for movement. Here, there were two or three parallel roads that ran along both of the river's banks. North and south of the river the terrain had a wooded and swampy character, and was less accessible, especially in the eastern part.

A vast lowland ran along the course of the Berezina (Dneprovskaia) River. Its length from north to south was around 300 kilometers, and its width in the southern part reached 100 kilometers. The general character of the terrain was wooded and swampy. The lowland was not very populated, had a limited number of roads, and it was therefore difficult to move large troop masses from east to west and back again. The most accessible sector was located north of Lake Palik. The Borisov region and south of it, the Berezino, Cherven', and Smilovichi region, and the Bobruisk region were more convenient for operations by large formations.

The Naroch' Lowland was formed by the Naroch', Servech', and Usha River valleys, and the upper Viliia River. This lowland was divided into two sections of hill ridges, approaching Vileika from the east. The general nature of the terrain was wooded and swampy.

The lowland between the Berezina (Nemanskaia) River and the upper Neman River (the so-called Naliboka Forest) was also wooded and swampy, with a poorly developed road network.

The lowlands at the upper Shara River (especially the Lake Vygonov region), the upper Merechanka River (southwest of Vilnius), the Grodno Forest, etc. should also be mentioned.

The vast Poles'e Lowland, which was formed by the Pripiat' River basin, ran along the entire southern part of the theater. It was cut by a large number of rivers, streams, and channels. The character of the terrain was wooded and swampy; a vast area of swamp covered up to 50 per cent of the total. Populated areas were rare, and the road network was poorly developed. Elevations were in the form of low hills, along which ran more convenient roads, facilitating troop movement in this wooded and swampy belt. On the whole, the Poles'e was unfavorable terrain for operations by large forces.

Forests occupied from one-quarter to one-third of the theater's entire area. Forests covered the vast Poles'e region. Large forest tracts were also located along the course of the Berezina, east and south of the town of Lida (the Naliboka Forest and others along the course of the Neman and its tributaries), in the Grodno region (the Grodno Forest and

Avgustov Forest), and in the Belostok region (the Belostok Forest and the Belovezhskaia Forest). Forests of varying degrees of importance were encountered almost everywhere. With the exception of individual sectors, the forests, in and of themselves, were not serious obstacles for troop movement, and they were good camouflage from enemy land and air surveillance.

It should be kept in mind, however, that the principal mass of forests was located predominantly in the lowlands, along river valleys, and in lake and swamp regions, which increased the inaccessibility of these regions.

Numerous rivers and streams cut the territory of the region of combat operations. The Sozh, Dnepr, and Berezina Rivers (as well as the Neman in the middle sector) flowed meridionally and intersected routes going from east to west, forming a series of serious natural obstacles at these points. The above-mentioned rivers were convenient defensive positions for the Germans, and our troops had to force them.

The Western Dvina and Pripiat' Rivers flowed primarily latitudinally. Isolating the actions of forces operating along both their banks, these rivers served as natural boundaries of the region. The most important operations of the four *fronts* in the summer of 1944 took place in an extensive terrain belt located between these rivers.

The Western Dvina in the Vitebsk, Polotsk, Daugavpils (Dvinsk) sector, where the 1st Baltic Front operations took place, was a serious obstacle: in this sector its width amounted to 100–350 meters.

The Dnepr in the Orsha, Zhlobin (mouth of the Berezina) sector had a width of 100–300 meters, and an average depth of two-four meters. The river valley extended two-four kilometers and more. The right bank was predominant. The 2d Belorussian Front's forces had to force this large water barrier on the Mogilev axis and develop the offensive further to the west.

Our troops had to force the Berezina along almost its entire length: on the upper river, where it flowed in a broad, swampy valley and where the river's width was 20–40 meters; in the middle course, between Borisov and Bobruisk, where the river's width was 50–120 meters; and in the lower river, where the width was 100–120 meters and where the width of the valley was four-seven kilometers and more.

The Neman was an important defensive line for the German-fascist forces, on which they attempted to stop our offensive, especially in the Kaunas and Grodno sector. The river width varied here, from 75–350 meters, with separate fording areas.

The Pripiat' served as the southern boundary of the region of the Belorussian operation. This river, together with the many tributaries flowing into it, formed the bifurcated Poles'e water basin. This basin's swampy river valley was cut by lakes, tributaries, old river beds, and ditches. The width of the Pripiat' River to the mouth of the Goryn' River was 90–200 meters; lower, it was 150–450 meters. The swampy banks, with abundant coves and tributaries, made it difficult to reach the river. In the 1944 summer campaign, the Pripiat', with its extensive, inaccessible valley, divided the 1st Belorussian Front's entire, vast operational belt into two separate sectors: one north of the Pripiat' and another to its south. This reality demanded that appropriate measures be taken when organizing command and control.

A large number of lakes were located primarily in the northern part of the region of operations. Some lakes were very large. Sometimes groups of lakes, combined with the

surrounding terrain features (swamps, woods, etc.) to form significant defiles and advantageous defensive positions (for example, the group of lakes south of Daugavpils).

The road network was not equally developed—many roads were located in the region's western part, while the network in Poles'e was less developed.

The principal railroad lines were as follows:

- Nevel', Polotsk, Molodechno, Lida, Volkovysk, and further to Sedlets [Siedlce]. The Polotsk, Molodechno, and Bogdanov Station rail-line sector was single-track, and the other sectors were double-track;
- Smolensk, Orsha, Minsk, Baranovichi, and Brest—double-track along the entire line;
- Krichev, Mogilev, Osipovichi, Baranovichi, Volkovysk, and Belostok—single-track with the exception of the Osipovichi, Slutsk sector;
- Gomel', Kalinkovichi, Luninets, and Zhabinka—the line to Kalinkovichi was double-track and further on it was single-track;
- Gomel', Zhlobin, Minsk, Molodechno, and Vilnius—the line to Olekhnovichi Station (northwest of Minsk) was double-track and the remainder was single-track.

The most important lateral lines were the following:

- Nevel', Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev, Zhlobin, and Kalinkovichi. At the beginning of our offensive this line in the enemy's immediate rear area ran through the Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev, and Bykhov sector and could be used by him for transport along the front;
- Daugavpils, Vilnius, Lida, Baranovichi, Luninets, and further to Sarny—single-track lateral line located in the enemy's operational rear;
- Vilnius, Grodno, Belostok, Brest, and further to Kovel'—a doubletrack line.

The density of the road network for motor vehicles and animal-drawn transport in the central part of Belorussia was up to 20 kilometers per 100 square kilometers (including three kilometers of highway and ten kilometers of improved dirt roads). In particular, the Minsk region was well provided with roads, where the Smolensk, Orsha, Borisov, and Minsk Highway and a number of other main roads ran. This contributed to the execution of extensive maneuver by large formations. The Red Army Command skillfully exploited this circumstance at the end of June and the beginning of July 1944.

In Poles'e there were six-eight kilometers of primary dirt road and less than two kilometers of main highway per 100 square kilometers. The roads here frequently ran along a wooded, swampy plain. Highways were outfitted with a large number of artificial structures (e.g. bridges, log paths, embankments). Most dirt roads were characterized by frequent alternation of dry, elevated sectors, which were difficult to cross because of sandy soil, with low, swampy sectors that made movement very difficult after rains.

Counting on holding on to Belorussia, the German command had already begun to build fortifications in 1941–42, and continued this construction up to the time of the offensive.

Information on the engineer preparation of the theater is covered in the respective sections.

The region's airfield network was adequately developed.

Developed agriculture and industry for processing local raw materials basically characterized the Belorussian SSR's prewar economy. The plundering German invasion

of Belorussia in 1941 and subsequent years of enemy occupation had ravaged the country. Many populated areas were burned and demolished, some inhabitants were killed or exiled to fascist penal servitude in Germany, and the region was thoroughly devastated.

Considering the positions of the opposing sides in Belorussia by the summer of 1944, terrain features, and the Red Army's offensive plan, the following principal operational axes may be distinguished.

1. The *Beshenkovichi-S'ventsiany axis.* The 1st Baltic Front forces operating in this terrain sector were to penetrate the German defense in the general direction of Sirotino and Beshenkovichi, force the Western Dvina, and subsequently develop the offensive westward in the belt between the Western Dvina from Polotsk to Daugavpils and the Lepel', Lake Naroch', and Podbrodze line. The large number of lakes in this sector and the wooded-swampy regions of the upper Berezina and Disna Rivers made it easy for the Germans to conduct defensive battles. The Soviet offensive along this axis provided important operational results and, in addition, supported the operations of our shock group [operating] along the Orsha- Minsk axis.

2. The *Orsha-Minsk axis.* Decisive combat operations developed along this most important axis. The 3d Belorussian Front's forces were to penetrate the German defense in the Bogushevsk, Orsha sector and develop the offensive to the Berezina River and further to Minsk (with part of the forces developing the offensive to Molodechno and further north). Local conditions permitted the execution of this decisive maneuver. The principal obstacles to movement and force operations along this axis were strong German fortifications in the Orsha region, and the wooded and swampy regions of the Berezina River north of Borisov, and of the Naroch' River between Lake Naroch' and Molodechno.

3. The *Mogilev-Minsk axis.* This axis led from the front to the Belorussian capital. Advancing forces were to penetrate the German defense by forcing the Pronia, Dnepr, Drut', Berezina, and several smaller rivers, including surmounting a wooded and swampy belt of Berezina forestland. This operational axis was secondary with respect to the Orsha-Minsk and Bobruisk-Minsk axes.

4. The *Bobruisk axis.* This axis bifurcated (after the occupation of Bobruisk) into the Bobruisk-Minsk and Bobruisk-Slutsk axes. Here our forces were to overcome a series of fortified positions built by the Germans to protect the Bobruisk region and to advance to the belt cut by a large number of rivers flowing in wooded and swampy lowlands. The 1st Belorussian Front's shock group operated within the boundaries of this axis, which was very important for the Belorussian operation.

During the subsequent development of the Belorussian operation (after the capture of Minsk, Polotsk, and Slutsk), important operations took place along the following operational axes: Dvina and Utensk; Minsk-Vilnius and Lida; Novogrudok and Grodno; Volkovysk-Belostok; and Baranovichi and Brest.

From the above-mentioned it follows that, in the majority of cases, the military-geographic conditions (with the exception of the region's unfavorable southern part) permitted the maneuver of large military masses outfitted with modern combat equipment and the conduct of extensive offensive operations. It should be remembered, however, that engagements were often conducted on terrain which made troop operations difficult, and tied down and restricted the maneuver of mobile formations. In these instances,

additional effort, great endurance, and skill in using all capabilities for overcoming unfavorable terrain and obstacles encountered on their routes were required of the forces.

OPERATIONAL PLANS OF THE *FRONTS*

On 31 May individual directives from the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command, signed by Comrade Stalin, ordered the 1st Baltic, 3d Belorussian, 2d Belorussian, and 1st Belorussian Fronts to prepare and conduct an operation to completely destroy opposing enemy forces.

These indicated to each *front* the aim of the forthcoming *front* operations, the immediate and subsequent missions (to a depth up to the Lepel', Borisov, and Slutsk line), the boundary [demarcation] lines with neighboring units, etc.

THE 1ST BALTIC FRONT

At the beginning of its preparation for the Vitebsk-Polotsk operation, the 1st Baltic Front consisted of the 6th Guards, 4th Shock, and 43d Armies. These forces defended along a line running north of Porech'e, through Lake Cherviatka, Novaia Igumenshchina, and Konovalova, to Balashevka on the Western Dvina River, 13 kilometers northeast of Vitebsk. The German Sixteenth Army's X and I Army Corps (of Army Group North), and the Third Panzer Army's IX and LIII Army Corps (of Army Group Center) were defending opposite these forces. Nine German infantry divisions were operating in the first line and five divisions were in reserve.

The enemy defense was based on adequately developed and fortified lines created over five-six months. The first defensive belt had a depth of two-four kilometers, and five-six kilometers on the most important axes. The second defensive belt extended 5–12 kilometers from the forward edge. The strongest defense had been erected along the Polotsk and Vitebsk axes, where the enemy expected our attacks. In conditions of a defense in lake and wooded-swampy terrain, the enemy had an operational density of 12–15 kilometers per division, and a tactical density of 2.5–3 kilometers per battalion.

To reinforce their position in the operational depth, the Germans intensified their penal expeditions against partisan regions in Belorussia.

A 31 May 1944 directive from the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command ordered the 1st Baltic Front to:

- Prepare and conduct an operation to destroy the enemy's Vitebsk-Lepel' grouping in cooperation with the 3d Belorussian Front and reach the southern bank of the Western Dvina River in the Chashniki and Lepel' region. To this end, employ the 6th Guards and 43d Armies to penetrate the enemy defense in the region southwest of Gorodok, while delivering one overall attack in the direction of Beshenkovichi.
- The immediate mission is to force the Western Dvina River and capture the Beshenkovichi region. Part of the force is to destroy the enemy's Vitebsk grouping and capture Vitebsk in cooperation with the 3d Belorussian Front's right flank. Subsequently, develop the offensive in the general direction of Lepel' while firmly protecting the main *front* grouping from the Polotsk axis.

The 1st Baltic Front's offensive along the precise axis specified by the *Stavka* flowed directly from the overall strategic concept for the Minsk operation and, in addition, provided a series of other advantages. The attack was delivered at the junction between German Army Groups North and Center, and created the real possibility of encircling and destroying the enemy's entire Vitebsk grouping, in cooperation with the 3d Belorussian Front's right flank.

Plan for front *operation*

In cooperation with the 3d Belorussian Front, the 1st Baltic Front was to destroy the enemy's Vitebsk-Lepel' grouping and reach the southern bank of the Western Dvina River in the Chashniki and Lepel' region. The penetration of the enemy defense was planned southwest of Gorodok in the Volotovki and Toshnik sector (a 25-kilometer penetration front). The main attack was delivered in the direction of Beshenkovichi. The immediate mission for the 1st Baltic Front was to force the Western Dvina River and, while cooperating with the 3d Belorussian Front, to crush the enemy's Vitebsk grouping and capture Vitebsk. The subsequent mission was to capture Lepel' and, on the tenth or eleventh day of the operation, to reach the Zelenyi Gorodok, and Krulevshchizna line (a depth of up to 100–130 kilometers). The operational tempo was planned to be an average of 8–12 kilometers per day. The *front* command planned the operation in three stages up to the Kovalevshchina and Chashniki line.

The first stage. The penetration of the enemy's main defensive belt and the arrival of the *front* shock group at the Zavodka and Ol'khoviki line. The depth was 9–11 kilometers. The duration was one day.

The second stage. The forcing of the Western Dvina River, the destruction of the enemy's Vitebsk grouping in cooperation with the 3d Belorussian Front's right flank, and the arrival at the Podory, Repinshchina, Dukovshchina, Kosarevshchina, Dubrovki, Chernogost'e, and Novki line; a depth of 26–32 kilometers. The duration was three days.

The third stage. The forcing of the Ulla River and the arrival of the *front* shock group at the Kovalevshchina, Pilatovshchina, Kamen', and Chashniki line. The depth was 26 kilometers. The duration was three days.

The second and third stages of the operation were planned to a depth of up to 55 kilometers, with a subsequent widening of the penetration front; the force of the attack was to increase as a result of the introduction of second echelons and reserves. *Front* forces, with the mission of delivering one general attack in the direction of Beshenkovichi and Chashniki, were simultaneously to encircle and destroy the German Vitebsk grouping, while cooperating with the 3d Belorussian Front, and firmly protect themselves from the direction of Polotsk. The execution of this mission was ensured by the creation of an appropriate *front* force grouping on the main and secondary axes.

In accordance with the general concept and operational plan, the armies and the 1st Tank Corps were assigned the following missions:

The *6th Guards Army*, consisting of 11 rifle divisions (the 51st, 47th, 90th Guards, 51st Guards, 67th Guards, 71st Guards, 29th, 270th, 9th Guards, 46th Guards, and 166th) and reinforcements, was to penetrate the enemy defense on the Volotovki and Novaia Igumenshchina front (an 18-km penetration front), defeat his Sirotino grouping, and, by the close of the first day of the offensive, arrive with the main forces at the Starosel'e,

Zavodka, and Gubitsa line. When part of the army had reached the line of the railroad, it was to support the commitment of the 1st Tank Corps' main forces into the penetration in the general direction of Beshenkovichi. Subsequently, the army was assigned the mission of energetically developing the offensive in the general direction of Chashniki, forcing the Western Dvina River, and reaching the Podory, Ulla, Dubishche, and Dubrovki front. The army's right-flank corps (the 22d Guards) was assigned the mission to capture and firmly secure the Obol' region to protect the shock group from the direction of Polotsk;

The *43d Army*, consisting of eight rifle divisions (the 179th, 306th, 357th, 156th, 235th, 334th, 145th, and 204th) and reinforcements, received the mission to deliver the main attack with its right flank, penetrate the enemy defense in the Novaia Igumenshchina and Toshnik sector (a 7-km penetration front), defeat his Shumilino grouping, and, by the close of the first day, reach the Il'nitsy, Ol'khoviki, and Iazvino line. Subsequently, the army's left-flank corps (the 92d Rifle) was to reach and firmly consolidate along the line of the Western Dvina River, while the main forces were to capture the Krivoe Selo, Zamosh'ia, and Chernogost'e line;

The *1st Tank Corps* had the mission to enter the penetration after the arrival of the 6th Guard's and 43d Army's formations at the line of the railroad southwest of Shumilino, and, while attacking in the general direction of Beshenkovichi, to force the Western Dvina River in the Dubishche and Sharylino sector, and capture a bridgehead on the southern bank of the river in the Beshenkovichi region;

The *4th Shock Army*, consisting of four rifle divisions and one rifle brigade (the 332d, 199th, and 360th Rifle Divisions, the 16th Lithuanian Rifle Division, and the 101st Separate Rifle Brigade) defending on the Porech'e, Lake Cherviatka, and (excluding) Starosel'e front, received the mission to attack with its left-flank division (the 360th Rifle Division) in the direction of Zavodka, and, in cooperation with the 6th Guards Army's right-flank corps, to destroy the enemy grouping northwest of Starosel'e. The sector north of Porech'e was allocated to the 2d Baltic Front. The overall length of the 1st Baltic Front's combat line was reduced to up to 160 kilometers;

The *3d Air Army* supported the *front* offensive with the mission to provide air cover for the *front* shock group, and, in cooperation with the ground forces, to suppress enemy combat formations and centers of resistance, and also prevent the approach of enemy reserves from the Polotsk, Lepel', and Chashniki axes.

THE 3D BELORUSSIAN FRONT

By the beginning of June 1944, the 3d Belorussian Front's forces occupied defenses along a front of 130 kilometers in the sector from the Western Dvina River to Baevo (45 kilometers east of Orsha).

The 39th Army was deployed along the Vitebsk axis, south of the Western Dvina River; the 5th Army's forces were grouped in the center; and the 31st Army was located on the Orsha axis. In connection with the preparation of the offensive operation, during the first ten days of June the 11th Guards Army arrived from the 1st Baltic Front. Its formations were concentrated in the forests south of Liozno.

Units of the German Third Panzer Army's LIII and VI Army Corps and the Fourth Army's XXVII Army Corps were operating opposite the 3d Belorussian Front. The Sixth

Air Fleet, which consisted of around 300 air-craft, was in support. The Germans had five infantry, one Luftwaffe field division, one panzer grenadier division, and several separate security and special units in the first line, as well as an assault-gun brigade. Operational reserves consisting of two infantry and two security divisions were deployed on the Lepel', Orsha, and Minsk axes. The German defense's operational density averaged around 14 kilometers per division.

In addition, a large number of separate regiments and battalions were operating in the enemy's operational depth; these had been sent by individual garrisons, and had the mission of protecting lines of communication and fighting against partisans.

Having undertaken a concentric offensive against the main partisan forces from the Budslav, Lepel', Senno, Orsha, Bobr, and Ostroshitskii Gorodok regions in May 1944, the Germans attempted to press them toward the impassable swamps adjacent to Lake Palik.

With respect to engineering, the German defense was a system of developed field fortifications using natural lines and convenient terrain objects. The depth and outfitting of defensive belts were varied, depending on the importance of the axes being protected and the nature of the terrain. The Germans protected Vitebsk and Orsha most firmly. Thus, on the Orsha axis the enemy had three equipped lines echelonned to a depth of 15–20 kilometers. The most important sectors were reinforced with mobile armored pillboxes or prefabricated reinforced concrete fire points. Mining was extensively employed. The defense on the Bogushevsk axis was less developed; here the enemy counted on the wooded and swampy terrain, lakes, and river obstacles, which hindered operations of large formations and equipment.

The Germans had a series of intermediate field-type positions at various degrees of readiness in the operational depth.

The 3d Belorussian Front was accorded a very important role in the planned large-scale operations by the four *fronts* to defeat the Germans in Belorussia. [This important role] was determined by the essence of the overall concept of the operation and the 3d Belorussian Front's place in that plan, as well as by the position the *front*'s forces occupied in the theater of military operations. Deployed at the 'Smolensk Gate' in the terrain belt between the Western Dvina and Dnepr Rivers, the [*front*'s] forces were located on the most important operational axis leading to Belorussia's central region and capital.

The 31 May 1944 *Stavka* directive ordered the 3d Belorussian Front to:

- Prepare and conduct an operation in cooperation with the 1st Baltic Front's left flank and the 2d Belorussian Front to defeat the enemy's Vitebsk-Orsha grouping and reach the Berezina River. To do so, penetrate the enemy defense while delivering two attacks:

  (a) one attack with the 39th and 5th Armies' forces from the region west of Liozno in the general direction of Bogushevsk and Senno, and an attack northwest enveloping Vitebsk from the southwest using part of this grouping's forces in cooperation with the 1st Baltic Front to defeat the enemy's Vitebsk grouping and to capture Vitebsk;

  (b) another attack with the 11th Guards and 31st Armies' forces along the Minsk Highway in the general direction of Borisov, and the capture of *Orsha* by an attack from the north using part of this grouping's forces.

The immediate mission of *front* forces was to capture the Senno and Orsha line. Subsequently, they were to develop the offensive to Borisov in cooperation with the 2d Belorussian Front to destroy the enemy's Borisov grouping and reach the western bank of the Berezina River in the Borisov region.

Mobile forces (cavalry and tanks) were to be used to exploit success in the general direction of Borisov.

The *Stavka* instructions transferred to the 3d Belorussian Front: the 11th Guards Army (consisting of the 8th, 16th, and 36th Guards Rifle Corps) from the 1st Baltic Front; and the 5th Guards Tank Army (consisting of the 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps, the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps, the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps); and powerful reinforcements from the *Stavka* reserve.

Based on the assigned mission, the *front* commander decided to create two shock groups. The first [was] in the region west of Liozno at the junction of the contiguous flanks of the 39th and 5th Armies (consisting of 13 rifle divisions, three tank brigades, and reinforcements). The second [was] east of Orsha in the Minsk Highway sector at the junction of the contiguous flanks of the 11th Guards and 31st Armies (consisting of 14 rifle divisions, one tank corps, two separate tank brigades, and the larger part of the reinforcement means).

The first group's mission was to attack with the larger part of its forces, consisting of the 5th Army, in the general direction of Bogushevsk and Senno. While exploiting the mobile formations' success, it was to reach the Berezina River in the region of Lake Palik and further north on the tenth day of the operation. Simultaneously, part of the force, consisting of the 39th Army, in cooperation with 1st Baltic Front, was to attack to the northwest to encircle and destroy the German Vitebsk grouping.

The second shock group was to attack in the Minsk Highway sector in the general direction of Orsha and to the north. It was to defeat the enemy's Orsha grouping, and, on the tenth day of the operation, employ its main forces to reach the Berezina River in the Borisov region and to the north.

After the penetration of the enemy's tactical defense zone in the 5th Army's sector, a cavalry-mechanized group consisting of the 3d Guards Mechanized and 3d Guards Cavalry Corps was to enter into the penetration.

It was to exploit success in the direction of Bogushevsk and Chereia and capture a crossing over the Berezina River on the fifth day of the operation.

The 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps (operating in subordination to the 11th Guards Army commander) was committed into the penetration in the 11th Guards Army's sector. The corps was to attack from the region northwest of Orsha, envelop Orsha from the north, cut the German Orsha grouping's lines of communication, and, by the end of the fourth day of the operation, capture the Starosel'e region (23 kilometers southwest of Orsha). Subsequently, while protecting the *front*'s left flank, the corps was to advance in the direction of Ukhvala and Cherniavka, and, by employing forward detachments, capture crossings over the Berezina River in the Cherniavka region on the sixth day of the operation.

The 5th Guards Tank Army was to be used in one of two variants in accordance with the situation on the third day of the operation. It was to enter the penetration either along the Orsha axis in the 11th Guards Army's sector with the mission of exploiting success along the Minsk Highway in the direction of Borisov or in the 5th Army's sector north of

Orsha in the general direction of Bogushevsk and Smoliany to reach the Minsk Highway in the Tolochin region. Subsequently, it was to advance along the highway to Borisov.

Front aviation was assigned the mission of cooperating with the combined-arms formations on the battlefield during the penetration of the enemy defense, isolating and cutting off enemy reserves, and also supporting mobile group operations in the operational depth.

The conduct of the operation was planned in two stages:

The first stage. Penetration of the enemy defense, the destruction of his Vitebsk and Bogushevsk-Orsha groupings, and the arrival of main front forces at the Berezina River with the capture of Borisov; and

The second stage. Forcing of the Berezina River and further development of the offensive to capture Minsk in cooperation with the 1st Belorussian Front's forces.

The *front* staff planned the first stage in greater detail, envisioning a tenday duration and a 160-kilometer depth of advance. The plan specified lines that mobile formations were to reach by the close of each day of the operation.

The average tempo of advance for combined-arms formations was planned to be 12–16 kilometers (30–35 kilometers for mobile formations) per day.

On 20 June, the *front* commander issued individual directives to the army commanders:

The *39th Army* was ordered to attack with a force of five rifle divisions from the Makarovo and Iazykovo front (18 and 23 kilometers south of Vitebsk) in the direction of Zamostoch'e, Plissy, and Gnezdilovichi. In cooperation with the 1st Baltic Front's 43d Army, [it was] to defeat the enemy's Vitebsk grouping and capture Vitebsk. The army's immediate mission was to penetrate the enemy defense in the Karpovichi and Kuzmentsy sector (a sector width of 6 kilometers), and, by the end of the first day of the operation, reach the Perevoz, Borisovka, Zamostoch'e, and Ovchinniki line. By the end of the second day, it was to reach the Rogi, Butezhi, Tserkovishche, and Moshkany line, and by the end of the third day the Ostrovno, Lake Sarro, and Lake Lipno line. Advancing army units were to link up with the 1st Baltic Front's forces in the Ostrovno region and completely encircle the enemy's Vitebsk grouping, while, simultaneously, part of the forces were to continue the offensive in the direction of Beshenkovichi.

The army's subsequent mission was to destroy the encircled enemy and capture Vitebsk.

In cooperation with the 5th Army, which was attacking to the south, one 39th Army division was to attack toward Simaki and Khodtsy State Farm.

The *5th Army* was ordered to attack from the Efremenki and Iul'kovo front in the direction of Bogushevsk with a force of eight rifle divisions and all reinforcements. The army's immediate mission was to penetrate the German defense in the Podniv'e and Vysochany sector (a sector width of 12 kilometers) and, in cooperation with the 11th Guards Army, defeat the enemy's Bogushevsk-Orsha grouping. By the close of the second day of the operation, the army was to capture Bogushevsk and reach the Moshkany, Chudnia, and Lake Devinskoe front, and, by the end of the third day, the (excluding) Lake Lipno, Novaia Obol', and Ianovo line. The subsequent mission was to develop a decisive attack in the direction of Senno, Lukoml', and Moiseevshchina, and, by the end of the tenth day of the operation, to reach the Berezina River near Lake Palik and further north with its main forces.

After reaching the line of the Luchesa River, the army was to support the commitment of the cavalry-mechanized group (the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps and the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps) into the penetration.

To roll up the enemy's front south of the penetration, the army commander was ordered to use part of his forces at the beginning of the offensive to advance energetically southward from the Iul'kovo and Shel'mina front in the direction of Babinovichi.

The *11th Guards Army* was ordered to attack in the Moscow-Minsk Highway sector in the direction of Tolochin and Borisov with a force of nine rifle divisions with all reinforcements. Its immediate mission was to penetrate the enemy's defense in the Ostrov, Iur'ev, and Kirieva sector (a sector width of eight kilometers) and, in cooperation with the 5th and 31st Armies, defeat the German Bogushevsk-Orsha grouping.

The army was to reach the Ianovo, Molotany, and Lamachin line by the end of the third day of the operation. Subsequently, it was to develop an energetic attack along the Minsk Highway, and it was to reach the Berezina River in the Borisov region and to the north by the end of the tenth day of the operation.

After reaching the Zabezhnitsa, Shalashino, and Bokhatovo line, the army commander was to commit the 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps into the penetration and ensure that the 5th Guards Tank Army was ready to be committed into the penetration on the morning of the third day of the operation.

To assist the 31st Army in capturing Orsha, the 11th Guards Army commander was to use the forces of one rifle division to envelop Orsha from the northwest.

The *31st Army* was assigned the mission to attack along both banks of the Dnepr in the direction of Dubrovno and Orsha with a force of five rifle divisions, penetrate the enemy's defense in the Kirieva and Zagvazdino sector (a sector width of seven kilometers), and, together with the 11th Guards Army, defeat the German Orsha grouping. The army was to capture Dubrovno by the end of the first day of the operation, and to capture Orsha and reach the Lamachin, Cherven', and Chernoe line by the close of the third day. Its subsequent mission was to advance to Vorontsevichi and Vydritsa (south of the Orsha and Borisov rail line). The army was to attack in the direction of Krasnaia Sloboda, Negotina, and Borodino with a portion of its forces (the 113th Rifle Corps, consisting of two rifle divisions), with the mission to roll up the enemy front to the south.

Simultaneously, a directive was issued to the cavalry-mechanized group. Its commander, Lieutenant-General Oslinkovsky, the commander of the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps, was ordered to be prepared to commit the cavalrymechanized group into the penetration on the night of the second day of the operation, after the 5th Army's capture of the Luchesa River line, and to develop the attack aggressively in the direction of Bogushevsk, Senno, Kholopenichi, and Pleshchenitsy.

Front forces were to be ready for the offensive by the morning of 22 June.

THE 2D BELORUSSIAN FRONT

By the beginning of June, the 2d Belorussian Front's forces, consisting of three armies (the 33d, 49th, and 50th), were defending occupied positions along a line from Baevo, through Lenino, Dribin, the eastern bank of the Pronia River, Ust'e, Smolitsa, and Staraia Grasna to Selets-Kholopeev. Eleven rifle divisions and a fortified region (six battalions) were defending in the first line along a 170-km front in the first line and eight divisions were in positions to the rear and in reserve.

Units of German Fourth Army's XXXIX Panzer, and XXVII and XXII Army Corps, which consisted of six infantry and one panzer grenadier division, opposed the 2d Belorussian Front.

Supposedly, the Germans had up to two infantry and one panzer grenadier division in reserve in the Mogilev region. The Germans' defensive operational density was around 17 kilometers per division.

The enemy's deeply echelonned defense on the left bank of the Dnepr in front of the 2d Belorussian Front protected large railroad junctions and the Orsha and Mogilev Highways.

The main German defensive line ran from Baevo south along the Kopyl, Remistvianka, and Pronia Rivers to Chausy Station, and further southwest to the Dnepr. This line had a developed system of defensive structures and field obstacles, reaching a depth of four-five kilometers.

In the depth along the western bank of the Basia and Pesta Rivers and along the Orsha-Mogilev Highway, the Germans had intermediate defensive positions with trenches and communication trenches that were reinforced in separate sectors with wire obstacles.

The enemy's rear defensive line ran along the western bank of the Dnepr and had a prepared system of trenches and obstacles. Mogilev, the center of the fortified region, was part of the rear defensive line system.

The terrain in the offensive belt was characterized by the presence of river obstacles, which considerably facilitated the enemy's stubborn resistance.

The most serious obstacles, requiring special engineer support when forcing, were the Pronia and Dnepr Rivers, and further into the depth the Drut' and Berezina Rivers.

With respect to the nature of the terrain and the presence of roads, the most convenient axis for the 2d Belorussian Front's offensive was the sector along the Mstislavl', Riasna, and Mogilev road. It was also more convenient to have the jumping-off area here, in that there were large forest tracts adjacent to the Pronia River, which contributed to secrecy of troop concentration.

In accordance with the 31 May directive from the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command, by 10 June the 2d Belorussian Front's Military Council had developed its operational plan.

The aim of the *front* operation was to defeat the enemy's Mogilev grouping, in cooperation with the 3d Belorussian Front's left wing and the 1st Belorussian Front's right wing, to reach the Berezina River, and to develop the offensive to the west.

The plan specified the following *front* missions:

- Penetrate the enemy defense while delivering one general attack from the Dribin, Dednia, and Riasna region in the general direction of Mogilev and Belynichi.
- The immediate mission is to reach the Dnepr and capture a bridgehead on its western bank. Subsequently, force the Dnepr with the main forces, capture Mogilev, and develop the offensive in the general direction of Berezino and Smilovichi.

The *49th Army,* consisting of 11 rifle divisions (combined into four corps headquarters—the 81st, 70th, 69th, and 62d Rifle Corps), was to deliver the *front*'s main attack. This army had as reinforcements ten artillery brigades and 15 artillery regiments, and two brigades and eight regiments of tanks and self-propelled guns. The army was to penetrate the German defense on a 12-km front (Khaliupy to Staryi Perevoz) on the western bank of the Pronia River, while delivering its main attack in the direction of Zatony, Ozer'e, and Barsuki.

The 49th Army's immediate mission was to force the Pronia River, penetrate the enemy's front, and reach the Basia River with its main forces, and capture a bridgehead on the river's western bank with its mobile detachments by the end of the first day of the operation. The shock group was to capture the Domany and Kureni line by the end of the second day of the operation. It was to sever the Orsha and Mogilev Highway north of Mogilev (in the Bel' and Mostok sector) by the end of the third day, having protected the shock group's flanks from the direction of Orsha and Mogilev.

The 49th Army's subsequent mission was to force the Dnepr, and to employ its main forces to reach the Vysokoe, Luzhki, and Sen'kovo line by the end of the fifth day, and to capture Mogilev by an attack from the north and northwest.

The *front*'s *mobile group,* consisting of one rifle division, two tank brigades, one antitank [tank destroyer] brigade, and other units, had the mission to reach the Dnepr in a decisive bound after the arrival of the 49th Army's shock group at the Basia River. It was to force the river and capture the Vysokoe, Staraia Vodva, and Luzhki line by the end of the third day of the operation, and hold it until the approach of the 49th Army's main forces.

On *the front*'s right flank, the *33d Army,* consisting of three rifle divisions and one fortified region, was to defend its occupied position firmly. When the offensive by the neighboring army on the right (the 3d Belorussian Front's 31st Army) began, in cooperation with it, [the 33d Army] was to attack the enemy on the Baevo and Lenino front in the general direction of Iurkova, Sava, and Mikhailovichi with one division. On the left flank, after the penetration of the Germans' defense by the 49th Army's shock group, the 33d Army was to use part of the 154th Fortified Region's forces to reach the Novyi Pribuzh and Zhevan' line and, while holding it firmly, to protect the 49th Army's right flank.

On the army's remaining front measures were made to pin down the enemy by means of small sub-unit actions. In addition, the plan envisioned army readiness to shift all of its forces to a general offensive westward in pursuit of the withdrawing enemy.

The *50th Army* (on the *front*'s left wing), consisting of eight rifle divisions (combined into three corps headquarters—the 38th, 121st, and 19th), five artillery regiments, two self-propelled artillery regiments, and other reinforcing units, had the mission to hold its occupied position firmly and to prepare one rifle company from each rifle division's first-line rifle regiment to conduct active operations. In addition, the 50th Army was to be

prepared to launch an attack in the general direction of Kutnia and Lykovo. The commander was ordered to dispatch a rifle corps to the army reserve by 16 June.

The plan was to commit this corps either into the 49th Army's penetration sector for operations against Chausy from the north, or into its own army's sector from the Sheperevo and Golovenchitsy line against Blagovichi.

The *front* chief of staff wrote the operational plan by hand in a single copy, and the army commanders, the *front* artillery, tank forces, and mechanized forces commanders, and the other generals signed for, and were [only] provided, those portions which pertained to them.

THE 1ST BELORUSSIAN FRONT

The 1st Belorussian Front's forces were deployed in a broad terrain sector extending from Komarichi (12 kilometers south of Bykhov) to Rogachev, Zhlobin, Mozyr', and further west to Kovel'.

The *front*'s right-wing forces, which were located north of the Pripiat' River, participated in the operation to defeat the Germans in Belorussia. At first, the 3d, 48th, and 65th Armies were operating [in this region], but, later, the 28th Army arrived from the *Stavka* reserve. Having replaced some of its units, it advanced into the first line and occupied a front south of the 65th Army before the offensive began. The overall extent of the right-wing armies' front was 240 kilometers.

These forces were opposed by the German Ninth Army, which consisted of the III and LV Army Corps and the XXXXI Panzer Corps and had up to 12 infantry divisions in its first line and four (security and reserve) divisions and one panzer division in its operational reserve. The operational density of the German defense north of the Pripiat' was around 18 kilometers per infantry division, and the densest defense was on the Rogachev-Bobruisk axis.

This grouping of forces made it obvious that, while expecting our offensive from the Rogachev and Zhlobin regions, the German command was striving to protect this axis firmly from the east, and, having concentrated its main forces in this region, it had created a dense and deeply echeloned defense. Obviously, with this in mind, the Ninth Army commander also retained his main operational reserves in the Bobruisk region. Thus, the flanks north of Rogachev and near the banks of the Pripiat' River were less protected.

Five defensive positions were prepared along the axis from Rogachev and Zhlobin to Bobruisk. The first and main defensive position ran along the Drut' and Dnepr Rivers; it turned southwest at Proskurin, resting on the Pripiat' River at Ptich'. The second position was constructed along the Dobritsa River, the third along the Dobysna River, the fourth along the Ola River, and the fifth along the Berezina River.

The enemy strongly fortified his main defensive positions to a depth of six, and, in some places, eight kilometers.

There were five or six trench lines in this belt. The remaining defensive positions were inadequately fortified and were often a single trench with open areas for firing.

The enemy turned Bobruisk into a large center of resistance.

The 31 May *Stavka* directive ordered the 1st Belorussian Front to:

- Prepare and conduct an operation to defeat the enemy's Bobruisk grouping and reach the Pukhovichi, Osipovichi, and Slutsk region with [the army's] main forces. To penetrate the enemy defense while launching two attacks: one from the Rogachev region in the general direction of Bobruisk and Osipovichi with the forces of the 3d and 48th Armies, and the other from the region of the lower course of the Berezina River in the general direction of Starye Dorogi and Slutsk with the forces of the 65th and 28th Armies.
- The immediate mission is to defeat the enemy's Bobruisk grouping and capture the Bobruisk, Glusha, and Glusk region. Then, using part of the forces on the right flank, cooperate with the 2d Belorussian Front's forces in defeating the enemy's Mogilev grouping. Subsequently, develop the offensive to reach the Pukhovichi, Slutsk, and Osipovichi region.
- Employ mobile forces (cavalry, tanks) to exploit success after the penetration.

Executing these *Stavka* orders, Army-General K.K.Rokossovsky (now Marshal of the Soviet Union), the 1st Belorussian Front commander, decided to penetrate the enemy defense north of Rogachev and south of Parichi and encircle and destroy the enemy's Bobruisk grouping. He planned to do so by means of powerful attacks in narrow front sectors in the general direction of Bobruisk and Glusha (on the right flank at the junction between the 3d and 48th Armies and in the center by the contiguous flanks of the 65th and 28th Armies). Subsequently, [the *front*] was to exploit success in two directions: toward Osipovichi and Pukhovichi, and toward Starye Dorogi and Slutsk.

To execute this plan, the *3d Army*, consisting of 13 rifle divisions and reinforcements, was to employ one rifle corps (of three divisions) to defend the northern sector (from Komarichi to Khomichi) stubbornly. It was to penetrate the enemy defense on a 12-km front (from Ozerane through Kostiashevo to three kilometers east of Tikhinichi) on its left flank with the force of eight rifle divisions and, while committing the 9th Tank Corps into the penetration, develop the attack in the general direction of Bobruisk. Two other divisions comprised the army's second echelon. When the army's main forces reached the line of the Ol'sa River, the left flank was to continue the offensive to Svisloch'.

To the left, the *48th Army*, consisting of nine rifle divisions, was to attack along the right flank in a 5-km sector (from Kostiashevo to Kolosy, two kilometers southwest of Rogachev) with a force of two rifle corps (with five rifle divisions). After forcing the Drut' River, the main forces were to exploit success along the Turki-Bobruisk axis, and, while attacking southward, part of the forces were to roll up the enemy's combat formations along the western bank of the Dnepr. Fire from all types of weapons and operations by separate detachments was to pin the enemy down along the army's left flank and in the center. When the enemy began to withdraw, all forces were to launch an offensive in the general direction of Shchedrin.

After capturing Bobruisk, the army's main forces were to exploit success in the general direction of Osipovichi and Pukhovichi.

The *65th Army*, consisting of eight rifle divisions and one tank corps with reinforcements, was to penetrate the enemy's defense north of Korma (on a 6-km front) with six rifle divisions, commit the 1st Guards Tank Corps, and, while developing the attack in the general direction of Glusha, sever all enemy communication lines approaching Bobruisk from the west. Part of the forces were to cooperate with the 3d and

48th Armies in the capture of the city. After arriving in the Glusha region, the main forces were to advance in the direction of Krinka.

The *28th Army*, consisting of nine rifle divisions with reinforcements, was to penetrate the enemy defense in a 9-km sector between Korma and Red'kovo with six rifle divisions and develop the offensive to Glutsk, while supporting the 65th Army's offensive from the south. After arriving at the line of the Ptich' River, the army was to advance to Starye Dorogi.

When the 65th and 28th Armies reached the Sekirichi, Liuban', and Volosovichi line, General Pliev's cavalry-mechanized group (the 4th Guards Cavalry Corps and the 1st Mechanized Corps) was introduced into the penetration at the junction of these armies with the mission of exploiting success in the general direction of Glusha. Subsequently, the group was to be prepared to operate in the rear of the enemy's Bobruisk grouping or in the direction of Osipovichi and Starye Dorogi, Slutsk.

The *Dnepr Military Flotilla* was to support the 48th and 65th Armies' offensive by fire and maneuver.

The *16th Air Army* was to support the 3d and 48th Armies' offensive with its main forces, and the 65th and 28th Armies with a portion of its forces. During the offensive, aviation supported the introduction of the cavalrymechanized group into the penetration, while several air formations were placed under the operational subordination of the army commanders.

The depth of the offensive to the capture of the Bobruisk, Glusha, and Glutsk region was 60–70 kilometers, with an average rate of advance of eight-nine kilometers per day.

The shock groups—northern and southern—were performing important missions. Their composition was almost equal, and each had a reinforcing tank corps. The main forces of the 4th Artillery Corps RGK [Reserve of the High Command] supported the southern group's offensive, but the northern group was allotted considerably more air support.

The narrow *front* penetration sectors and the concentration in them of large forces and weaponry made it possible for forces to penetrate and advance at a high tempo.

In his concept of the operation, the *front* commander attached great importance to the rapid advance of his southern grouping, which (with the employment of a strong cavalry-mechanized group in its sector) was to overwhelm the enemy's Bobruisk grouping from the west and encircle its main forces east of the Berezina River. The operational plan envisioned not only the encirclement and destruction of the enemy in the Bobruisk region but also the subsequent rapid advance of *front* forces to Pukhovichi, Minsk, and Starye Dorogi, Slutsk.

2
Preparations for the Operation

In the center [Moscow] and in the *fronts*, the preparation of the large offensive operation in Belorussia was begun on the basis of the instructions of the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command. Preparatory measures were conducted in strict secrecy, and embraced all kinds of operational activities, troop combat training, and rear area work. The preparatory period within the fronts continued from the end of May-22 June, and separate measures were carried out even earlier.

Our long-range aviation delivered massed attacks against enemy airfields beginning in mid-June. Thus, on the nights of 13 and 14 June, German airfields in the regions of Brest, Belostok, Baranovichi, Pinsk, Minsk, Bobruisk, and Orsha were subjected to bombing raids. Repeated attacks were made on the nights of 16 and 18 June.

Necessary secrecy and operational *maskirovka* [deception] measures were implemented to mislead the enemy with respect to our intentions. In particular, the Red Army General Staff assigned to the 3d Ukrainian Front the mission of 'demonstrating' the concentration of an army for an offensive along the Kishinev axis [in Romania] (a false concentration). These operational *maskirovka* measures, which played a considerable role, were conducted at the end of May and in June.

THE 1ST BALTIC FRONT

All activities for preparing the command, staffs, and forces of the 1st Baltic Front for the operation were planned for the period of 29 May-22 June, that is, for 25 days. After the preliminary decision by the *front* commander and his transmission of instructions to the 6th and 43d Army commanders, and also to the chiefs of the combat arms, the *front* and army staffs quickly began to develop operational plans, timetables for their preparation, the sequence of replacements and arrivals of forces in concentration regions, the organization of commandant's service, reconnaissance, full troop manning, and material support, as well as preparing *front* directives and other necessary documents.

Reconnaissance of enemy

The 1st Baltic Front's command and staff focused considerable attention on improving all types of reconnaissance. During June, up to the beginning of the offensive operation, 18 prisoners were captured who confirmed the enemy grouping which had been established earlier.

Radio reconnaissance *[radiorazvedka]* successfully detected enemy radio stations of the Sixteenth Army in Ludza, the Third Panzer Army in Beshenkovichi, the X Army

Corps in Rudnia, the I Army Corps in Borovukha, the IX Army Corps in Ulla, the LIII Army Corps in Vitebsk, the 87th Infantry Division in Skaby, etc.

All types of reconnaissance revealed and defined more precisely: restored enemy rail lines, their traffic capacities, the average traffic intensity along them, and the presence of track-wrecking machines at the Molodechno, Sebezh, Polota, and Vitebsk stations. Reconnaissance also successfully determined the movement of enemy troop trains. Air reconnaissance tracked the transfer of enemy forces operating against partisans in Ushachi and in the Polotsk and Begoml' region, and of separate units in Beshenkovichi.

Front reconnaissance aviation regularly monitored traffic along the highways, railroads, and dirt roads up to 150 kilometers into the depth. The enemy's airfield grouping was revealed to the entire operational depth, and work at these airfields was monitored daily. Air reconnaissance units photographed an area of more than 48,000 square kilometers, and photographed probable enemy troop-movement routes along main axes. The decoding of these photos disclosed around 600 railway trains, up to 300 batteries, up to 400 pillboxes, up to 700 machine-gun and fire points, 6,000 dugouts, 4,000 motor vehicles, and 50 storage depots. Photo mosaics were prepared for ground forces on the basis of aerial photographs.

A large network of surveillance posts (combined arms, artillery, and engineer) was set up in the sector of the forthcoming penetration. Secondechelon formations and also *front* and army staffs set up their surveillance organs on the main attack axis. In particular, *front* and army staffs set up their surveillance organs on 10 June, that is, almost two weeks before the commencement of the operation. Round-the-clock surveillance of the enemy defense was conducted from these surveillance posts.

The network of artillery surveillance posts, including artillery battalion cross-observation posts, was especially extensive. Sound reconnaissance, which encompassed the entire penetration sector, was used to study the enemy artillery grouping. Observation of enemy behavior in the depth of the defense was organized from air surveillance balloons. In 6th Guards Army's offensive sector alone, the coordinates of 47 enemy artillery batteries were determined as a result of carefully organized artillery reconnaissance.

All intelligence information about the enemy obtained from ground and air reconnaissance was systematized and analyzed at headquarters, and then plotted on a general intelligence map. These maps were copied and sent to units and formations as the primary document for planning the artillery offensive. Data concerning the nature of the enemy defense and his grouping, acquired during the preparation for the operation, was confirmed during battle. The fine work by reconnaissance organs considerably facilitated the planning and conduct of the offensive operation for the command.

Organization of command, control, and communications

The *front* command decided to echelon the *front* field directorate into three states: an operational group, the *front* headquarters, and a second echelon headquarters. In addition, before the penetration, a surveillance post for the *front* commander was organized in the jumping-off position.

The operational group included the *front* Military Council, the *front* chief of staff, the chiefs of the combat arms with their own operational groups, and the main portion of the

operational directorate, the intelligence and code sections, and the communications directorate. The operational group essentially carried out troop control. In fact, it was the *front* command post.

The directorates of the chiefs of the combat arms, a portion of the operational directorate and the intelligence and code sections, the communications directorate, the counterintelligence directorate, as well as the manning, cadre, topographic and combat-training sections, the political directorate, the military tribunal, and the procurator were located at the *front* headquarters.

It should be noted that such a dispersal of *front* command posts considerably complicated the organization of communications and resulted in a large expenditure of communications forces and equipment.

By the beginning of the operation, the *front* and army command posts were distributed as shown in Table 1.

The organization of wire communications was planned to a depth of 60–70 kilometers. It was planned to build the *front* axis in eight cables from Voikhany to Sirotino, Shumilino, Beshenkovichi, and Kamen'. Two line communications battalions and one telegraph-telephone station company were allocated for the construction and restoration of this axis. Planners intended to have telegraph and telephone lines assembled in four cables along the axes to the armies. A great deal of work in constructing and restoring telegraph and telephone lines was required in support of the offensive.

The overall volume of planned work for the construction and restoration of telegraph and telephone lines is shown in Table 2.

TABLE 1. THE DISTRIBUTION OF *FRONT* AND ARMY COMMAND POSTS IN THE 1ST BALTIC FRONT DISTANCES FROM (IN KM)

Command post	*Location*	*Front Lines*	*Front Hqs*	*Front Op.Gp.*	*Front Co.O.P.*
Front headquarters	Pankty	50	–	–	–
Front operational Group	Malye Skrypki	10	–	–	–
Front commander's OP	Hill 174.3	4	–	–	–
Front second-echelon Headquarters	Osteki	70	20	–	–
4th Shock Army	Bol'shoe Sitno	18	37	–	–
6th Guards Army	Kadi	11	–	10	–
6th Guards Army commander's	Baidury	1.5	–	–	4

OP					
43d Army	Belianki	7	–	12	–
43d Army commander's OP	Hill 161.9	1.5	–	–	9

TABLE 2. THE CONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNICATIONS LINES IN THE 1ST BALTIC FRONT (IN KM)

	In the Jumping-off Positions	*During the Operation*	*Overall*
Lines Constructed	25	83	108
Cable Constructed	128	304	432
Lines Hung	128	107	235
Cable Hung	265	214	479
Lines Restored	–	508	508
Cable Restored	–	1,876	1,876
Total Lines	153	698	851
Total Cable	393	2,394	2,787

Thus, according to the plan, a total of 851 kilometers of lines had to be constructed and restored and 2,787 kilometers of cable had to be restored and hung.

A total of 207 tons of cable and 12 kilometers of river cable were required to carry out the above-mentioned construction and restoration of the lines and cables. The availability of line materials and river cable completely supported envisioned requirements.

The communications directorate had at its disposal nine construction and four cable-and-pole companies to carry out this work. These personnel were able to manage the work completely, ensuring normal troop control with the tempo of their advance, that is, eight-ten kilometers per day.

Radio communications

The plan envisioned the echelonment of radio equipment and the creation of a reserve of radio equipment in order to ensure continuous radio communications while shifting command posts. Two radio centers were organized, one deployed at *front* headquarters and the other with the operational group. Nine radio stations were held in reserve; some of these were at *front* headquarters and some were with the operational group.

Front headquarters communicated with the General Staff using 'RAT' radio stations on an acoustic channel and *Bodo* radios [enciphered telephone/telegraph apparatus]. A special Radio Network No. 15 was created for communications between fronts, in which the *front* headquarters' radio stations and the radio stations of Marshal Vasilevsky's

operational group operated. Radio Network No. 16 was created for communications with the flanking armies. All *fronts* and armies had information concerning the operation of this radio network, and radio stations of cooperating armies from contiguous fronts were to enter this network as required.

The radio communications of the *front* headquarters with the armies was organized with the help of powerful and low-powered radio stations. The main channel was radio communications by means of powerful radio stations working along individual radio axes.

Experience demonstrated that such an organization ensured the greatest stability of radio communications.

Mobile communications

During the preparation for the offensive, great attention was focused on mobile communications means. Twenty aircraft (Po-2s), 14 motor vehicles, ten motorcycles, and three tanks were allocated to this end. Of these means, there were eight aircraft, four motor vehicles, and two motorcycles at *front* headquarters; and eight aircraft, seven motor vehicles, four motorcycles, and two tanks with the operational group. The remaining mobile means were in reserve.

Regrouping and concentration of forces

By the beginning of the preparatory period, the 1st Baltic Front (consisting of the 6th Guards, 4th Shock, and 43d Armies) was occupying a defensive line extending 214 kilometers. The 1st Baltic Front's right boundary line had changed at the beginning of June. The defensive sector north of Porech'e returned to the 2d Baltic Front. The 6th Guards Army, which had occupied this defensive sector, was withdrawn into the 1st Baltic Front's reserve to be employed subsequently on the main attack axis. As a result of this measure, the length of the 1st Baltic Front's combat line narrowed to 160 kilometers. By virtue of a decision by the *front* commander, the boundary line between the 4th Shock and 43d Armies also changed. Both armies' sectors narrowed, and it was planned to introduce the 6th Guards Army into the junction between them, on an 18-km front.

To create an appropriate force grouping for the offensive, it was necessary to regroup and concentrate forces on the attack axis during a period of three weeks. During this time, it was necessary to:

- receive formations and units arriving from the Reserve of the High Command and bring them forward into the concentration region;
- regroup the 6th Guards Army on the attack axis and create a shock group in the 43d Army; and
- reinforce the 6th Guards and 43d Armies with forces and weaponry arriving at the *front* and also joining it from secondary axes.

During the first half of June, besides the 103d Rifle Corps (the 29th and 270th Rifle Divisions), a number of artillery, tank, and engineer units and formations were assigned to the *front* from the Reserve of the High Command, and the 46th Guards Rifle Division was tranferred from the 2d Baltic Front. The 11th Fighter Aviation Corps and the 382d

Assault [Ground Attack] Aviation Division arrived to reinforce the 3d Air Army, which was part of the *front.*

Representatives of the *front* and army staffs met arriving formations and units at stations (south and southwest of Nevel'), and, subsequently, brought them forward into their concentration regions in accordance with their orders.

The regrouping of the 6th Guards Army from the right flank to the attack axis was accomplished in three stages. During the first stage (1–9 June), the 6th Guards Army's first-echelon divisions were replaced by the 2d Baltic Front's forces, and army formations were concentrated in the 4th Shock Army's sector. During this period, the 103d Rifle Corps (the 270th and 29th Rifle Divisions), the 46th Guards Division, and other reinforcements joined the 6th Guards Army. During the second stage (13–18 June), the 6th Guards Army's formations moved forward into their sectors (in regions 12–18 kilometers from the forward edge). During the third stage, the next to the last night before the offensive (that is, the night of 22 June), the 6th Guards Army's infantry moved forward and deployed four-six kilometers from the forward edge. Battalions that were attacking in the first echelon entered the first trench line. All first-echelon division battalions occupied jumping-off positions for the offensive on the night before the offensive.

In the 43d Army, forces and weaponry were regrouped to the [army's] right flank. By increasing the defensive frontage for first-echelon divisions, the army command succeeded in placing several rifle divisions in reserve. Subsequently, these divisions, together with the 357th Rifle Division that had arrived from the 4th Shock Army, formed the 1st and 60th Rifle Corps. This corps moved forward into its jumping-off positions for the offensive in the same formation as the 6th Guards Army.

Artillery moved forward into its positional regions in two stages. During 10–13 June, artillery reached pre-position regions, which were located 10–28 kilometers from their new firing position regions, and during 13–21 June it moved forward into firing positions. Tanks occupied assembly areas (10–13 kilometers from the forward edge) two-three days before the offensive. Tanks arrived at their jumping-off positions the night before the offensive. All troop regrouping and concentration of forces took place during the night, and were supported by a well-organized traffic control service and strict *maskirovka* measures.

Force training

Intensified combat-training exercises with command cadre of all levels, staffs, and troops began immediately after the completion of the spring offensive operations. The *front* Military Council conducted the training for all senior command personnel.

The training of rifle and tank regiment commanders, corps, division, and regimental chiefs of staff, and battalion and artillery battalion commanders was conducted at army headquarters, while instruction for rifle company and artillery battery commanders was held at corps headquarters. The themes for these courses were actual tactical situations the forces would confront in the upcoming offensive.

Intensified combat training was carried out directly among the troops. Second-echelon sub-units and reserves engaged in normal training. Sub-units occupying the defense were withdrawn to the rear area one after the other where they conducted training according to

a five-day program. Troop combat training emphasized the cohesiveness of companies and battalions in company and battalion exercises, and in exercises with field firing. These exercises, which approximated reality as closely as possible, worked out the most important questions of offensive battle. Moreover, special attention was devoted to, among other things, the cooperation of infantry with tanks and artillery, movement techniques on the battlefield, the attack, the forcing of water obstacles, an offensive in wooded and swampy terrain, and an attack against enemy strong points.

Combat training continued during the force regrouping (in June 1944) in accordance with a specially compiled ten-day program.

The work conducted in the training of headquarters command cadre and troops considerably facilitated the execution of forthcoming missions involving the penetration, the forcing of rivers, and the swift pursuit of a withdrawing enemy.

Preparation of bridgehead [jumping-off area]

Units of the 154th and 156th Rifle Divisions, which were defending along the main attack axis, performed the principal work in preparing the jumping-off position for the offensive. When creating the jumping-off position for the offensive, planners took into account the necessity to have three trenches in the first position for the armies' first echelons, not counting the forward trench with its associated communication trenches that protected the jumping-off position.

Given the fact that, in some places, the forward edge of some formations was 1,000–1,200 meters from the enemy, it was necessary to carry out considerable work to advance the trenches in the penetration sector so as to approach up to 300 meters. It should be noted, however, that, before the operation began, they did not succeed fully in digging three trenches on the main attack axis and in completing the work to push the trenches forward.

To a considerable degree, the jumping-off position for the offensive was located on boggy, wooded, and swampy terrain. There were only a limited number of prepared roads in the army and *front* rear area, and there were practically none in the forces' rear area. The paths and dirt roads being used were greatly burdened by the flow of combat vehicles, ammunition, and troops. Therefore, special attention was focused on preparing roads and laying column routes for the movement of tanks and artillery in the *front*, army, and especially the force rear. Overall, it was necessary to prepare more than 500 kilometers of roads. During the preparation for the operation, road and repair work swallowed up the greatest part of engineer forces. Division, army, *front*, and sapper units were employed for road work. Thus, in a 12-day period no less than an average of 4,700 men per day worked in the sector of the 6th Guards Army's forthcoming offensive. As a result of road construction during the preparatory period for the operation, 275 kilometers of road were built and restored, and 820 kilometers were repaired (graded).

Material support

A sufficient quantity of ammunition, food and forage, and POL [petroleum, oil, and lubricants] had been brought up to the forces and into *front* and army depots by the time the operation began. Thus, by 1800 hours on 21 June, there was up to 3.5 combat loads

[at one load per combat day] of various types of ammunition with the forces and in depots of the 6th Guards and 43d Armies. The situation was somewhat worse regarding the availa-bility of rounds for 45mm guns (in all, around two combat loads). By this time, a 14–22 days supply of food and forage rations had been brought forward to these armies. The situation was somewhat worse regarding the supply of oats (there was 7-days' ration in the 6th Guards Army and only 3 in the 43d Army). There were 2–4 loads [refuelings] of POL in the armies. In addition to these reserves, there was a considerable quantity of ammunition, food and forage, and POL for the armies in the *front* depots. There were a total of 110,305 beds for the wounded in front hospital bases, and 16 veterinary hospitals.

Operational and combat formation of the front

The *front* shock group, consisting of the 6th Guards Army and two corps (the 1st and 60th Rifle Corps) from the 43d Army, was to penetrate the enemy defense on a 25-km front. The *front* commander had at his disposal the 1st Tank Corps as an echelon for exploiting success, and the 154th Rifle Division, which had been brought up from the front-line, in reserve. The army's combat formation was structured in one and two echelons. The 6th Guards Army, consisting of four rifle corps (11 rifle divisions) structured its combat formation in two echelons. Two rifle corps (the 22d and 23d Guards Rifle Corps) were in the first echelon and two corps (the 2d Guards and 103d Rifle Corps) were in the second. Delivering its main attack using two rifle corps, the 43d Army structured its combat formation in single echelon. This army had no second echelon or reserve.

The 6th Guards Army's corps structured their combat formations in one echelon. In the 43d Army, the corps attacking on the main axis structured their combat formation in two echelons with two divisions in the first echelon and one in the second. Available front tank brigades and regiments, as well as self-propelled artillery regiments, were designated to provide direct infantry support.

Thus, the *front*'s main forces were concentrated in the 6th Guards Army's penetration sector. The presence of powerful second echelons in this army made it possible to resolve large-scale operational missions. The 43d Army occupied a wider front (56 kilometers) and had fewer forces. This circumstance made it impossible for the army command to allocate second echelons, even on the attack axis. There were, however, second echelons in the corps delivering the main attack (the 1st and 60th Rifle Corps). On the whole, the 1st Baltic Front's operational and combat formation was appropriate for the operational plan, the existing situation, and the availability of forces and weaponry.

Artillery support of operation

The 1st Baltic Front had assigned to it (not counting authorized rifle division artillery regiments) 76 artillery, mortar, and antitank [tank-destroyer] artillery regiments; three guards mortar brigades; and five guards mortar regiments.

Taking into account rifle division and regimental artillery, there was a total of 4,419 guns and mortars (not counting 45mm guns and guards mortars) in all artillery formations and regiments. More than 70 per cent of the guns and up to 80 per cent of the mortars were concentrated on the main attack axis.

The density of artillery weaponry in the penetration sector (not counting the antitank guns and guards mortars) was 125–130 guns and mortars per one kilometer of frontage. If guards mortars (581 in all) concentrated on the main attack axis are also counted, then the artillery density here was even greater.

The procedure for the artillery offensive was developed by the *front* artillery staff and approved by the Military Council. Army, corps, and division artillery staffs received from higher headquarters a graphic [schedule] of the artillery offensive, including the ammunition expenditures, during each stage of the battle, a plan and a graphic for ranging, and a combat order or combat instructions indicating the allocated reinforcing weaponry. Targets for destruction and sectors for suppression were noted and planned directly by the executors themselves, with the army artillery commanders subsequently approving fire plans. This planning method made it possible to organize artillery and mortar fire in greater detail (with observed targets or target centers reduced to sectors).

The following scheme was established for the artillery offensive:

- ranging and monitoring for two hours; on the penetration front ranging coincided with combat by reconnaissance sub-units;
- 90 minutes was allotted for the destruction period; direct-fire guns were included during the last 20 minutes;
- 45 minutes was allotted for the suppression period; during this time all guns and mortars would fire with maximum intensity; the principal efforts were aimed at suppressing the enemy's firing system and personnel in the first and second trenches (to a depth of up to two kilometers); and
- 30–60 minutes was allocated for a fire barrage to accompany the infantry and tanks—until the infantry had captured and consolidated the first and second trench lines; subsequently, successive fire concentrations accompanied the infantry.

There was an average of three-four ammunition loads [units] in depots and among the troops by the time the offensive commenced. Depending on the availability of ammunition and the nature of the enemy defense, the expenditure of ammunition for the first day of battle was planned according to the following norms (expressed in combat loads): 2.5 82mm and 120mm mines and artillery rounds for 122mm guns; 1.5 for 45mm and 76mm; 2.25 for 122mm and 152mm howitzers and 152mm guns; and 2 for 203mm guns.

Air support

The 3d Air Army, which was assigned to the 1st Baltic Front, had a strength of 1,094 aircraft. The plan for the offensive operation assigned the 3d Air Army with the missions to:

- cover the shock group of the 6th Guards and 43d Armies and the 1st Tank Corps in the jumping-off position and during the offensive;
- in cooperation with the ground forces, suppress enemy combat formations and centers of resistance in the offensive sector (special attention was focused on Sirotino, Dobrino, and Shumilino as centers of resistance);

- prevent the approach of enemy reserves from the Polotsk, Lepel', and Chashniki axis; and
- support the 1st Tank Corps' commitment into the penetration, and assist its advance to the Beshenkovichi region and its capture of crossings over the Western Dvina River.

Cooperation between the 3d Air Army and the 6th Guards and 43d Armies and 1st Tank Corps was organized on the principle of support. Air support of the operation was planned for a total of three days, that is, until the infantry reached the line of the Western Dvina.

Table 3 shows the planned air combat intensity for the first three days of the operation:

TABLE 3. AIR SUPPORT IN THE 1ST BALTIC FRONT

Aircaft type	*Quantity of aircraft*	*Number of sorties*	*Average no. of sorties per aircraft*
Assault	340	2,550	7.5
Fighter	350	3,430	9.8
Pe-2	10	20	2.0
Po-2	80	450	5.6
TOTAL	780	6,450	8.3

As is apparent from Table 3, the 3d Air Army's planned combat intensity was quite considerable, and required of the command good organizational and preparatory work.

Engineer support

By the beginning of the operation, the *front* included (not counting authorized rifle division assets) two assault engineer-sapper brigades, three army engineer-sapper brigades, a motorized engineer brigade, nine pontoon and bridge battalions, two defense construction directorates, and a number of other sapper units and sub-units. The command concentrated more than 90 per cent of all engineer forces and equipment on the main attack axis.

During the preparation of the offensive operation, the main engineer support tasks were engineer reconnaissance of enemy obstacles, the preparation of a bridgehead for the offensive, the removal of our own and enemy minefields, the preparation and protection of tank passages in the 'neutral' sector, road construction and repair, and the preparation of column routes.

Regimental and divisional sappers from rifle divisions defending on the attack axes conducted engineer reconnaissance. In the ranks, separate platoons from army engineer battalions were enlisted to assist and monitor the work, and the engineer chiefs also conducted personal reconnaissance.

During the preparation for the operation, great significance was attached to mine clearing.

Continuous mine clearing took place along the axes of tank operations.

The removal of German minefields took place during the last two nights before the offensive. The removal of enemy minefields was completed and reconnaissance sub-units were fighting on the afternoon of 22 June and the night of 23 June.

While preparing the road network, [we] assessed that difficulties would arise during the period when our combat equipment and troops' rear services were passing from our forces' own jumping-off positions to the roads prepared by the enemy. In particular, this terrain sector could become impassable after rain. Anticipating this fact, engineer units prepared the necessary timber materials beforehand.

As a result of enormous work, the necessary number of roads and bridges was built, thus ensuring the concentration of forces and the delivery of everything necessary for battle.

During the period of the penetration and force operations in the operational depth, the following missions were assigned to engineer units and formations:

- support of the penetration of the enemy's main defensive belt (mine clearing and the accompaniment of tanks and infantry);
- restoration of army and corps march routes;
- support of the forcing of the Western Dvina River (the erection of crossings and the construction of bridges);
- protection of the flanks of the penetration; and
- mine clearing and ultimate restoration of front roads in the 6th Guards and 43d Armies' sectors.

In order to carry out these missions, the bulk of reinforcing engineer equipment was distributed to the armies. The pontoon battalions were attached primarily to the 1st Tank Corps to support the forcing of the Western Dvina. During the offensive, however, the pontoons lagged behind, and this delayed the forcing of water lines by the tank corps.

Correlation of forces and weaponry

After changing the [formation] boundaries on the night of 6 June, the defensive sector north of Porech'e passed to the 2d Baltic Front. The width of the 1st Baltic Front's front was reduced from 214 to 160 kilometers. In this *front*'s operational sector, the enemy had seven divisions in the front-line (the 389th, 87th, 205th, 252d, 56th, 246th, and 4th) and four in reserve (the 281st, 221st, 391st Security, and 24th Infantry Divisions), not counting various types of separate units. In addition, units of the 95th Infantry and 201st Security Division were deployed in the Lepel' region at the junction with the 3d Belorussian Front. These divisions could be employed against either or both of the indicated *fronts*.

The 1st Baltic Front (the 4th Shock, 6th Guards, and 43d Armies) had 24 rifle divisions, one rifle brigade, one tank corps, three artillery and mortar divisions, four tank brigades, four tank regiments, four self-propelled artillery regiments, and a number of other artillery and engineer units and formations at the beginning of the operation.

Table 4 shows the correlation of forces along the entire front (160 kilometers).

Since, on average, it had an almost two-fold superiority over the enemy in personnel and a three- to four-fold superiority in artillery, the *front* command concentrated more than 90 per cent of its tanks, up to 80 per cent of its personnel and mortars, and more than

70 per cent of its artillery along a 25-km front on the main attack axis (in the Volotovki and Toshnik sector).

The operational plan considered that the enemy would commit his main operational reserves during the penetration of the defense on the Beshenkovichi-Lepel' axis, mainly against the *front* shock group. Thus, the *front* shock group was opposed by the main forces of two divisions in the first line (the 252d and 56th Infantry Divisions) and three divisions from the immediate operational reserves. Taking into account these five enemy divisions, Table 5 shows the correlation of forces and weaponry on the main attack axis (a front of 25 kilometers).

TABLE 4. THE CORRELATION OF FORCES IN THE 1ST BALTIC FRONT'S SECTOR

Enemy			*Our Forces*		
Overall	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Forces and weaponry*	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Overall*	*Superiority over the enemy*
11*	14–15 kms front per division	Divisions	6–7 kms front per division	24	2.2:1
133,500	834	Combat personnel	1,391	222,712	1.7:1
15,282	95.5	Automatic weapons	321.6	51,453	3.41
7,443	46.5	Machine guns	52.7	8,432	1.1:1
823	5.1	Mortars	13.9	2,216	2.7:1
622	3.9	Antitank guns	4.6	730	1.2:1
728	4.5	Field guns	13.2	2,120	3:1
130	0.8	Tanks and self-propelled guns	3.6	582	4.5:1
314	–	Aircraft	–	1,094	3.5:1

Note: * Does not include the 95th Infantry and 201st Security Divisions.

TABLE 5. THE CORRELATION OF FORCES IN THE 1ST BALTIC FRONT'S MAIN ATTACK SECTOR

Enemy			*Our Forces*		
Overall	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Forces and weaponry*	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Overall*	*Superiority over the enemy*
5	5 kms front per division	Divisions	4 kms front per division	18	3.6:1
55,500	2,220	Combat personnel	7,151	178,783	3.2:1
6,844	274	Automatic weapons	1,613	40,326	6:1
3,362	134.5	Machine guns	245.5	6,137	1.8:1
371	15	Mortars	69.2*	1,729	4.6:1
278	11	Antitank guns	21.1	528	1.9:1
321	13	Field guns	68	1,693	5.3:1
90	3.6	Tanks and self-propelled guns	21.6	539	6:1
314	–	Aircraft	–	1,094	3.5:1

Note: * Does not include guards mortars *(katiushas).*

As is evident from Table 5, as a result of the regrouping of forces and weaponry, the *front* command succeeded in concentrating more than a three-fold superiority in personnel and five- to six-fold superiority in artillery and tanks on the attack axis.

Thus, the overall superiority of forces and weaponry on the entire front—and especially the three- to six-fold superiority on the attack axis—made it possible for the 1st Baltic Front to resolve successfully its assigned missions.

THE 3D BELORUSSIAN FRONT

The 3d Belorussian Front received a great quantity of combined-arms, tank, and artillery formations and other special units in order to carry out its assigned mission.

In addition to the two armies (the 11th Guards and 5th Tank) and the three corps (the 3d Guards Stalingrad Mechanized, 3d Guards Cavalry, and 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank) mentioned above, just in the case of artillery reinforcements the *front* received more than 15 artillery brigades and several separate special and high-power artillery battalions.

The total quantity of tanks and self-propelled guns in the *front*'s tank and mechanized formations amounted to around 1,500.

Concentration of forces and operational maskirovka *[deception]*

During the period 3–21 June, the *front* was supposed to receive (besides the 11th Guards Army, which was approaching on foot) 350–380 operational troop trains, which were arriving from the Smolensk and Krasnoe embarkation region.

Officers from the *front* headquarters' operational directorate equipped with vehicles were assigned to the disembarkation stations. In addition, special groups were created to regulate traffic on the roads from the disembarkation stations to the concentration regions. Disembarked troops were quickly sent to their assigned concentration regions on the order of the *front* headquarters representative. Concentration regions were chosen in large wooded areas at a distance from the forward edge, such that newly arriving units could not be detected by enemy ground reconnaissance.

Having begun to arrive on 25 May, the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps completed its concentration on 2 June in the Gusino Station and Katyn' Station region.

The 5th Guards Tank Army, whose first echelons had begun to arrive in mid-June, had concentrated by 23 June with the 29th Tank Corps in the region 25 kilometers southeast of Rudnia and the 3d Tank Corps in the region 25 kilometers northeast of Krasnoe.

Having been located in the *Stavka* reserve prior to 11 June, the 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps was concentrated in the Arkhipovka, Krasnaia Gorka, and Bliznaki region. The overall distance of the mobile forces' concentration regions from the forward edge was 50–60 kilometers.

The corps of the 11th Guards Army had concentrated in the forests southwest of Liubavichi by 10 June, having completed a 250-km march from the Nevel' region. The 16th Guards Rifle Corps (the 1st, 11th, and 31st Guards Rifle Divisions) was in the Gorbovo, Ozery, and Dubrovka region (12–20 kilometers south of Dobromysl'). The 8th Guards Rifle Corps (the 5th, 18th, and 26th Guards Rifle Divisions) was in the Koty and Skumaty region south of Kriuki (6–12 kilometers south and southwest of Liubavichi). Finally, the 36th Guards Rifle Corps (the 16th, 83d, and 84th Guards Rifle Divisions) was in the Marchenki, Novaia Zemlia, and Markovo region (10–12 kilometers south of Liubavichi). The overall distance of the 11th Guards Army's formations from the forward edge was 10–20 kilometers.

Special attention was focused on the *maskirovka* [camouflage] of disembarking troops and their subsequent concentration. Movement along roads was permitted only at night. *Maskirovka* of troop concentration regions was checked from the air by staff officers during over-flights that took place no less than three times a day.

It was also forbidden to carry any correspondence whatsoever concerning the upcoming offensive and the concentration of new forces. Newly arriving units were forbidden to conduct ground reconnaissance until special instructions were received from *front* headquarters. During the entire period of force regrouping and their arrival at jumping-off positions for the offensive, the existing fire regime was strictly maintained.

Commanders' personal reconnaissances [on the ground] were permitted in small groups of no more than three men.

New air units could conduct training flights at a distance no closer than 25 kilometers to the forward edge.

Simultaneously with measures for concealment and *maskirovka* of the offensive preparations, extensive measures were implemented to disorient the enemy and create the impression that our forces were shifting to a prolonged defense (digging trenches, simulation of minefield construction, false troop movements, etc.).

Strict control was established over the execution of all *maskirovka* measures, and for this purpose special officers were assigned to headquarters.

The measures that were carried out were fully effective. Prisoners captured before the commencement of our offensive and during the operation itself stated that, although the German command expected active operations by our forces, it did not know the time for the commencement of the offensive or our force concentration and grouping. However, although the enemy was generally correct in his assessment that the Orsha axis was to be the main one, he did not presume that there was also a very powerful grouping concentrated on the Bogushevsk axis. German units defending on this axis did not have significant reinforcements or reserves, and the defensive positions here were the least developed.

Troop combat training

Troop combat training played a great role in the preparation of the operation. Divisions assigned to penetrate the enemy defense were withdrawn into the second echelon in advance. Here, along with reinforcements with which they would actually be operating during the offensive, they conducted exercises at specially equipped camps and training ranges that simulated the German defense.

Special attention was paid to working out techniques for infantry offensive operations under conditions of overcoming the enemy's trench defense, and on refining the cooperation of infantry with tanks and artillery.

The principal requirement for the infantry was to advance swiftly and without halting during the attack. Infantry was to master the technique of moving across enemy trenches so as not to be delayed, and so as to penetrate to a depth of 12–14 kilometers on the first day, that is, to overcome completely the tactical belt of the enemy defense.

Regrouping of forces and occupation of jumping-off positions

The introduction of the 11th Guards Army's formations into the *front*'s first offensive echelon began four days before the beginning of the offensive. In the course of two days, the 11th Guards Army had relieved the 152d Fortified Region's left-flank sub-units and two of the 31st Army's right-flank divisions (the 192d and 88th) in the Protasovo, Tsentral'nyi Poselok, Pushchai, and Kirieva sector. Then, together with the 152d Fortified Region, which had been transferred to it, the army occupied the sector between Vinokorno No. 1 and Kirieva, an expanse of 35 kilometers. Small sub-units (from a company to two battalions) from each division that was designated to operate in the army's first echelon carried out this relief. During the last two nights before the offensive (the nights of 22 and 23 June), army formations were brought to the jumping-off area and occupied sectors accepted beforehand by designated sub-units.

The 11th Guards Army commander concentrated his main grouping for the attack along an 8-kilometer front in the sector between Zapol'e and Kirieva along the Moscow-Minsk Highway on the army's left flank. This grouping was made up of the 8th and 36th Guards Rifle Corps, consisting of five divisions with the 120th Tank Brigade and the greater part of all the reinforcements. The 16th Guards Rifle Corps with the 152d Fortified Region occupied the 27-kilometer wide sector from Vinokorno No. 1 to Tsentral'nyi Poselok.

The 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps, which was designated for commitment into the penetration in the 11th Guards Army's sector, moved forward by brigade night marches. By the morning of 22 June, it concentrated in waiting positions behind the 8th and 36th Guards Rifle Corps at a distance of 12–18 kilometers from the forward edge.

As a result of the 11th Guards Army's introduction into the first line and the establishment of its southern boundary line virtually along the Krasnoe-Orsha rail line, the 31st Army's front was cut in half (from 65 to 30 kilometers). This made it possible for the 31st Army commander to create a shock group on the army's right flank (in the 7-km sector between Kirieva and Bobrova), consisting of five rifle divisions (the 71st and 36th Rifle Corps) and the 213th Tank Brigade. By order of the army commander, this grouping's mission was to attack in the general direction of Dubrovno.

On the 39th Army's front along the Vitebsk axis, forces were regrouped to the left flank. Here, five divisions, together with the 28th Tank Brigade and other reinforcements, were concentrated on a 6-kilometer front in the Makarovo and Iazykovo sector. The 5th Guards Rifle Corps' position hanging over the right flank of the Germans' Vitebsk grouping created favorable conditions to envelop and encircle the enemy with an attack to the northwest, in cooperation with the 1st Baltic Front's 43d Army.

As a consequence of the establishment of the new boundary line between the 39th and 5th Armies, the latter's front was truncated from 35 to 22 kilometers.

In addition, to consolidate the first-echelon combat formations and increase their shock power, the 5th Army commander introduced the 65th Rifle Corps, which had been located in the army's second echelon, in between the 72d and 45th Rifle Corps, and it occupied a 5-kilometer sector. As a result of this regrouping, the army commander created a shock group consisting of six rifle divisions (the 72d and 65th Rifle Corps) with two tank brigades (the 153d and 2d Guards) and the greater part of available reinforcements in the 12-kilometer sector between Iazykovo and Iul'kovo on the army's right flank.

This group's mission was to attack in the general direction of Bogushevsk and support the commitment into the penetration from the Luchesa River line of the cavalry-mechanized group, which by 22 June was concentrated in the Liozno region (15–20 kilometers from the forward edge).

As a result of the enormous reinforcements it received in combinedarms formations and equipment, the 3d Belorussian Front had an overall superiority over the enemy of 2.5 times in personnel, and three to six times in equipment. Table 6 shows the overall correlation of forces in the *front's* operational sector, which extended 130 kilometers:

TABLE 6. THE CORRELATION OF FORCES IN THE 3RD BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S SECTOR

Enemy			*Our Forces*		
Overall	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Forces and weaponry*	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Overall*	*Superiority over the enemy*
13	10 kms front per division	Divisions	4 kms front per division	33	2.5:1
157,300	1,210	Combat personnel	3,085	401,089	2.5:1
8,793	67.6	Machine guns	103.3	13,430	1.5:1
997	7.6	Mortars	28.8	3,746	3.8:1
764	5.8	Antitank guns	13.8	1,770	2.3:1
675	5.2	Field guns (76mm and up)	20.5	2,670	4:1
116	0.8	MRLs*	5.3	689	6:1
472	3.6	Tanks and self-propelled guns	14.0	1,867	4:1
328	2.5	Aircraft	15.3	1,991	61

Note: * Includes *panzerfausts* and *katiushas.*

As a result of the regroupings, we achieved a decisive superiority in forces and weaponry over the enemy on the main attack axes (in penetration sectors). The correlation of opposing forces on the Bogushevsk and Orsha axes are shown in Table 7.

Operational formation of forces

All combined-arms armies attacked in the *front*'s first operational echelon. The second echelon consisted of mobile formations designated to develop the penetration achieved by the combined-arms formations.

The armies' rifle corps were formed into a single line. Accordingly, five divisions of the 39th Army, five divisions of the 5th Army, four divisions and a fortified region of the 11th Guards Army, and six divisions of the 31st Army attacked in the corps' first echelons. In the second echelons were two, three, four, and one division respectively, that is, a total of ten divisions. In addition, the 5th Army commander had two divisions in his reserve and the 11th Guards and 31st Army commanders had one division each. The

TABLE 7. CORRELATION OF FORCES IN THE 3RD BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S MAIN ATTACK AXES ON 23 JUNE 1944

(A) *On the Bogushevsk axis in the 5th Army's offensive sector (a penetration sector of 12 kilometers)*

Enemy			*Our Forces*		
Overall	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Forces and weaponry*	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Overall*	*Superiority over the enemy*
1 div 3 bns	16 kms front per division	Divisions	2 kms front per division	6	
13,583	1,132	Combat personnel	3,491	41,895	3:1
707	59	Machine guns	139	1,667	2.3:1
98	8.2	Mortars	42.6	511	5.2:1
84	7	Antitank guns	17	207	2.5:1
90	7.5	Field guns (76mm and up)	55	662	7.4:1
36	3	MRLs*	16	194	5.4:1
45	3.7	Tanks and self-propelled guns	21	251**	5.6:1

(B) *On the Orsha axis in the 11th Guards Army's offensive sector (a penetration sector of 15 kilometers)*

Enemy			*Our Forces*		
Overall	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Forces and weaponry*	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Overall*	*Superiority over the enemy*
2 divs, 1 regt, 2 bns	10 kms front per division	Divisions	1.4 kms front per division	11	
28,320	1,888	Combat personnel	7,915	118,729	4.2:1
1,800	120	Machine	274	4,107	2.3:1

		guns			
218	14.5	Mortars	77.4	1,161	5.3:1
181	12	Antitank guns	32	482	2.7:1
220	14.6	Field guns (76mm and up)	80	1,193	5.4:1
54	3.6	MRLs*	24	360	6.6:1
70	4.7	Tanks and self-propelled guns	24.7	371**	5.3:1

Notes: * Includes *panzerfausts* and *katiushas*.
** Tanks and self-propelled guns in the echelon for developing the penetration are not counted in these figures.

combat formation of the majority of rifle divisions was formed in one echelon, with all regiments in a single line.

The penetration sectors assigned to each division on the attack axis did not exceed 1.5–2 kilometers.

This formation made it possible for first-echelon forces to deliver a powerful and simultaneous attack against the enemy defense, while the presence of strong second echelons and reserves made it possible to exploit success rapidly.

Preparation of command and control

Anticipating that the large number of mobile formations attached to the *front* during the operation would place great demands on command and control, the *front* command undertook measures beforehand to ensure stable communications among the forces. Fifteen reserve officers were attached to the *front* headquarters' operational directorate as communications officers. A sufficient number of Po-2 aircraft and motor vehicles were allocated to this group so that it could accomplish its work.

Responsible representatives with a group of officers (two or three officers from the operational directorate, an officer-scout, officer-tankman, and cipher clerk) were dispatched for duty in all mobile formations. A radio station, which maintained direct communications with the *front* headquarters, was attached to each group. As experience demonstrated, during the operation these radio stations were the primary channels through which communications were maintained between the *front* headquarters and the mobile formations.

The *front* and army headquarters were prepared for rapid relocation and deployment. To this end, mobile communications centers were fitted out, which consisted of several motor vehicles on which, among other things, central telephone stations, ST-35s, and *Bodos* were mounted.

An operational group (the first echelon of the *front* field headquarters) was created for flexibility in troop control and for bringing the army leadership closer to the *front* commander.

Attention was paid in the corps and armies to the preparation of radios and mobile communications means to ensure command and control in the light of the rapid offensive tempos. Corps and divisional commanders had radio stations with them and were able to assign missions personally to units by microphone.

For several days prior to the beginning of the operations, the *front* commander, who had personally visited the troops, verified the course of the offensive preparations and issued instructions on the spot for the correction of the shortcomings he observed. In particular, the 11th Guards Army commander was ordered to transfer all corps and divisional com-manders and artillery men to their observation posts on 14 June, from where they were to direct the entire preparation and be ready to receive arriving forces. The artillery was ordered to deploy at carefully camouflaged firing positions no further than five kilometers from the forward edge (including the heaviest systems as well), and to bring up all headquarters forward to a distance not exceeding the length of their own formation's or unit's front.

All preparation was to be completed by 0800 hours on 21 June. On 21 and 22 June army commanders were to conduct a careful verification [of all preparatory measures].

Supporting the operation

The *front*'s forces received three artillery penetration divisions, one gun division, one guards mortar division, and five separate special- and highpower artillery battalions from the Reserve of the High Command. The overall quantity of *front* artillery (together with 82mm and 120mm mortars) reached 5,752 tubes. In addition, there were up to 680 launchers in the guards mortar units. Troop ammunition supplies amounted to 2.5–4 combat loads.

Of the tank forces assigned to the *front*, it had five separate tank brigades, six separate tank regiments, 19 regiments, and nine self-propelled artillery battalions in its penetration echelon, which totaled 392 tanks and 486 self-propelled guns.

The *front* had two separate corps (one tank and one mechanized) and a tank army, which consisted of two tank corps, in its echelon for developing the penetration, with an overall quantity of 766 tanks and 223 self-propelled guns.

The total number of tanks and self-propelled guns in the *front* amounted to 1,867.

The fuel supply was from two to three refuelings.

The *front* offensive was supported by the 1st Air Army, which had 1,991 airplanes, of which 894 were fighters, 547 assault [ground-attack] aircraft, and 473 bombers, with the remainder reconnaissance aircraft and spotter planes.

In an engineer respect, *front* forces were reinforced with three assault engineer brigades, four engineer-sapper brigades, and a pontoon-bridge brigade.

Such a large quantity of reinforcing weapons and equipment made it possible to concentrate an overwhelming amount of equipment on attack axes; in addition, however, this entailed enormous requirements for organizing command and control and rear service support.

THE 2D BELORUSSIAN FRONT

The 2d Belorussian Front's forces began to prepare for the offensive immediately after the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command issued its 31 May 1944 directive.

The *front* Military Council approved the operational plan and announced it to army commanders and members of military councils on 10 June. On the same day, a directive concerning the regrouping of forces and preparations for the forthcoming operation was given to the 49th Army commander and, on 12 June, to the commanders of the 33d and 50th Armies.

The preparation of forces for the penetration proceeded at accelerated tempos with respect to all types of anticipated activities.

The infantry trained intensively in forcing water obstacles by all available means and in overcoming enemy defensive positions.

The artillery units focused their primary attention on working out problems of cooperation with infantry and tanks. A considerable portion of the time was devoted to preparing firing positions, reconnoitering targets, and coordinating problems of cooperation during the penetration of the enemy defense.

The tank and mechanized forces carried out considerable work in training crews, building cohesion in sub-units, and also working out problems of cooperation with infantry and artillery.

In the preparation of forces for the offensive, the *front* Military Council attached great importance to exercises with generals and officer cadre. The primary subjects addressed by these exercises were: the commander's reconnaissance of the jumping-off position for the offensive; study of the enemy's defense; the arrival of forces in the jumping-off position for the offensive and at the line of attack; the mastery of skills in organizing cooperation within units and formations, as well as with attached and supporting reinforcements; methods for re-establishing cooperation that had been disrupted during battle; and the organization of continuous command and control during combat.

Measures were also undertaken in formation and unit headquarters to ensure success in forthcoming combat operations (the development of plans, memoranda, requisitions, etc.), and, in addition, every day staff officers monitored how troops carried out the requirements of the *front* and army command. Special attention was focused on observing secrecy in all work being carried out.

The preparation of the bridgehead for the offensive required enormous forces and equipment, and preparing it received serious attention. Simultaneously, measures were carried out to support the forcing of the Pronia River, approach routes to the crossings (to the planned bridges and fords) were fitted out, and bridge elements were assembled, as were on-hand materials for crossings by the forward sub-units.

Build-up of rear [rear services]

The decision was made to have the *front* Administrative Station No. 8 in Roslavl' and the advanced [lead] sections of the main depots in Krichev. Subsequently, when the armies arrived at the line of the Dnepr River, the administrative station was to relocate to

Krichev, and the advanced sections of the main depots to Khodosy and Veremeiki Stations. Restoration of the railroad lines was accomplished in two stages: during the first stage, the Veremeiki, Chausy, and Mogilev line at a rate of six kilometers per day; in the second stage, the Temnyi Forest, Pogodino, and Orsha line at the rate of eight kilometers per day.

The armies were based [as follows]:

- The 33d Army was based in the railroad sector from Krichev No. 1 to Temnyi Forest (with the passage of four pairs of trains for the 49th Army). Army Base No. 28 was at Khodosy Station and its [sub-] sections were at 87-km Station (together with that of the 49th Army) and Temnyi Forest. Subsequently, the army base relocated to Temnyi Forest when the army reached the line of the Basia River.
- The 49th Army was based in the railroad sector from Krichev No. 1 to Vremeiki. Army Base No. 30 was at Osovets Station and Vremeiki and its [sub-] section was at 87–km Station (in the 33d Army's sector). Subsequently, the [sub-] section of the army base on the ground opened in the Khil'kovichi and Khoroshki region (both points were 30 kilometers east of Mogilev) when the army reached the line of the Dnepr River.
- The 50th Army was based in the water sector of the Sozh River between Krichev and Propoisk. Army Base No. 33 was in Propoisk. On the army's right, flank mobile detachments carried out services to Vremeiki Station. Subsequently, the [sub-] section of the army base relocated to the Chausy and Kutnia regions (30 kilometers southeast of Mogilev) when the army reached the line of the Dnepr River.

In early June the *front* Military Council was ordered to amass reserves totalling three combat loads of ammunition, five POL refuelings, and 20-days supply of food and forage for the 49th Army and 15-days supply for the 33d and 50th Armies in the forces, on the ground, and at army bases by 18 June.

The preparatory work for the establishment of the rear area [and rear services] had basically been completed by 20 June. All materials had been issued to the troops. To avoid losses, the depots were scattered and the reserves in them were buried in the ground.

Command and control

During the preparatory period for the operation, all measures for organizing command and control and communications were worked out in detail. Communications centers were prepared for all headquarters, command and observation posts were fitted out, and procedure tables, tables of radio signals, unit codings, and encoded maps were developed and distributed to the forces. At this stage and subsequently, with respect to troop control, the *front* commander was often in personal contact with army, corps, and division commanders, and *front* and army staff officers frequently visited the troops.

The *front* command post was located in a forest in the Gorbatovshchina region, 19 kilometers from the front-line. The *front* commander's observation post was fitted out in the region of Hill 222.0, south of Verba. In addition, officers of the operational directorate were located at observation posts, which were prepared in the vicinity of the combat formations of the shock group's first-echelon divisions (four observation posts).

When organizing wire communications, plans considered the possibility of enemy disruption of fixed communications. In this respect, plans were made to restore the communications and to construct new lines. Plans envisioned extensive use of telephone-construction companies, radio communications, and mobile means (Po-2 airplanes, motor vehicles, and motorcycles) in the event of a lag in fixed communications.

By the time the operation began, *front* forces had been fully provided with the principal types of communications equipment (there were 2,780 radio stations, 16,570 telephones, 20,790 kilometers of telephone-telegraph single-wire cable, and two-three replacement elements for telephones and batteries for radio stations).

The available quantity of communications equipment and the well-thought-out organization of communications fully ensured reliable *front* troop command and control for the forthcoming operation. *Occupation of the jumping-off position for the offensive*

The formations and units of the 2d Belorussian Front's shock group (the 49th Army on the main attack axis) began the offensive on the night of 21 June 1944. By this time the forces selected for operations along the main attack axis had been gradually transferred to concentration regions and deployed around Riasna, in a radius of up to 20 kilometers, within the 49th Army's boundary lines.

The order of arrival of forces and the relief of units was approximately the same as that which occurred in the 1st Baltic and 3d Belorussian Fronts.

The force formation of the 2d Belorussian Front's shock group for the penetration had its own peculiarities. It reflected the requirement to ensure the defeat of the Germans' defense to their entire depth in the direction of Riasna and Mogilev, with the simultaneous forcing of the Pronia and Dnepr Rivers.

By the beginning of the offensive, their four [rifle] corps were located in the planned penetration sector, which was 12 kilometers wide (from Khaliupy to Kamenka), each with a division in its first echelon. These divisions had their regiments deployed in a single row. There were another four divisions in the corps' second echelons at a depth of three-five kilometers behind the first-echelon divisions. Still further, there were two divisions, which constituted the third echelon, located at a depth of 7–15 kilometers from the front-line. In addition, there were two rifle divisions in the *front* commander's reserve, which were located on the *front*'s flanks by the time the operation began. However, these could be brought forward to the main attack axis when the offensive developed.

As a result of the regrouping, by 23 June the overall correlation of forces in the sector of *front* operations was as shown in Table 8.

Table 9 characterizes the correlation of forces (taking into account the approach of up to two divisions from the enemy reserve) along the main attack axis (in a sector of 12 kilometers).

The penetration of the German defense along the Mogilev axis and the subsequent exploitation of success were achieved by using main forces with all reinforcing means on the main attack axis. Twelve divisions and a fortified region (of which two divisions were in the *front* commander's reserve) were left on the remaining front expanse (160 kilometers).

The success of the operation was also conditioned by the fact that, while it was completely equipped with artillery and tanks and was supported by aviation, the *front* shock group was also deeply echeloned.

TABLE 8. THE CORRELATION OF FORCES IN THE 2D BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S SECTOR (LENGTH OF THE FRONT LINE—172 KILOMETERS)

Enemy			*Our Forces*		
Overall	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Forces and weaponry*	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Overall*	*Superiority over the enemy*
10	17 kms front per division	Divisions	8 kms front per division	22	2.2:1
114,000	663	Combat personnel	928	159,600	1.4:1
4,150	24.1	Machine guns	33	5,750	1.4:1
742	4.3	Mortars	10.6	1,818	2.5:1
693	4	Antitank guns	5.6	974	1.4:1
857	5	Field guns (76mm and up)	10.1	1,738	2:1
220	1.3	Tanks and self-propelled guns	1.5	251	1.1:1
350	–	Aircraft	–	593	1.7:1

TABLE 9. THE CORRELATION OF FORCES IN THE 2D BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S MAIN ATTACK AXES ON 23 JUNE 1944

Enemy			*Our Forces*		
Overall	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Forces and weaponry*	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Overall*	*Superiority over the enemy*
3	4 kms front per division	Divisions	1.2 kms front per division	10	3.3:1
34,200	2,850	Combat personnel	5,710	68,500	2:1
1,245	104	Machine guns	211	2,533	2.1:1

225	19	Mortars	68	817	3.6:1
210	18	Antitank guns	43	521	2.5:1
145	12	Field guns (76mm and up)	79	948	6.5:1
150	13	Tanks and self-propelled guns	19	227	1.5:1
350	–	Aircraft	–	593	1.7:1

THE 1ST BELORUSSIAN FRONT

Reconnaissance of the enemy

The 1st Belorussian Front's forces had already begun to prepare for the offensive in May.

While preparing the offensive, staffs and formations focused primary attention on careful and thorough study of the enemy's defenses.

The 16th Air Army's reconnaissance aviation completely photographed enemy fortifications on the Bobruisk axis. The resulting photographs of the German defense were quickly transferred to maps, duplicated, and sent to the forces. As a result, the depth of the enemy defense, the nature of defensive structures, the condition of crossing sites, the location of his reserves, etc. were accurately determined. Ground reconnaissance also worked intensively. Day and night reconnaissance groups penetrated into the enemy's dispositions and determined unit boundaries, approaches to the forward edge, the nature of obstructions, and the presence of minefields.

The armies on the *front*'s right flank conducted around 400 night and daylight reconnaissance raids throughout the preparatory period, and, as a result, they seized 84 prisoners and important documents and weapons, and carried out a large number of diversionary acts.

Additionally, ground reconnaissance revealed up to 30 enemy mortar batteries, 124 machine-gun firing points, 16 observation posts, and five armored cupolas, and determined the location of enemy minefields, wire, etc.

Army staffs, under the direction of experienced workers, organized continuous surveillance of the enemy and conducted intensified reconnaissances-in-force for several days before the beginning of the offensive. In particular, on 22 and 23 June such reconnaissance succeeded in precisely establishing that the enemy was occupying and stubbornly defending the first trench, without having changed his force grouping.

Operational maskirovka *[deception]*

Simultaneously with the reconnaissance, our forces worked on operational *maskirovka* and ensuring surprise for the planned offensive. By order of the *front* headquarters, our forces conducted defensive work in May and June, which significantly diverted the enemy's attention from the offensive being prepared.

As a rule, forces were concentrated toward the front and regrouped at night. During the day, false movement of tanks, artillery, infantry, and rail-road trains with dummies was carried out from the front to the rear. False crossings and roads were prepared in many places, and false camouflage nets were set up. Concentrated forces were sent back across rivers only at night and on pontoon bridges that were disassembled at dawn and carefully camouflaged. A considerable quantity of artillery was concentrated in secondary sectors; having conducted several fire raids against the enemy's dispositions, this artillery was then withdrawn to the rear, and dummy guns were left at these false firing positions. For example, in the 48th Army's sector south of Rogachev alone, more than 200 false artillery and mortar battery mock-ups were set up during the preparatory period. The concentration of tanks, self-propelled guns, and other reinforcement means was extensively simulated on secondary axes.

The *front* headquarters carried out observation of the covert force concentration. Officers from the Red Army General Staff's Operations Directorate were also allocated especially for this purpose. They monitored *maskirovka* discipline by flying over the dispositions of regrouping forces, reported the surveillance results to the General Staff, and quickly took appropriate action with respect to those units which violated established measures for covert concentration.

Organization of command and control

Great attention was focused on staff coordination at all levels and the organization of uninterrupted force command and control. Staff exercises and war games on the theme 'The Penetration of an Enemy Defense and Supporting the Commitment of Mobile Forces into Battle' were held at *front* headquarters and in the armies in early June.

The *front* and army staffs systematically verified troop readiness for the offensive during the preparatory period. As a rule, command representatives participated in all tactical troop exercises in the field, verified the firing preparations of newly arrived reinforcements, saw to it that ammunition and food were delivered in timely fashion, ensured the regrouping of *front* forces, etc.

In order to ensure more flexible command and control of forces, a portion of the *front*'s staff officers were constantly attached to the armies and to separate corps and provided communications with them.

To maintain complete secrecy, the *front* operational plan was written by hand and kept in a single copy. Operational directives with missions for the given formation were prepared beforehand for lower headquarters. These operational directives were sent to the troops after the *front* commander had personally assigned the army commanders their missions for the offensive. In this case, however, the *front* commander instructed that only the chief of staff and chief of the operational section of the army staff were permitted to become familiar with the directive. The remaining executors were to be assigned tasks within the confines of their specific duties.

Missions for the offensive were assigned in writing to the corps five days before the beginning of the offensive, and to the divisions three days prior to it. Up to this time, army commanders had to give only oral instructions on all matters concerning preparations for the offensive.

When organizing force command and control for the 1st Belorussian Front, a specific feature was the fact that, while operating in wooded and swampy terrain, the Pripiat' River basin divided the *front* into two independent parts. Consequently, in addition to the main command post located south of the Pripiat', an auxiliary command post was organized in the Duravichi region on the *front*'s right flank. In fact, the armies operating in the Bobruisk region conducted the offensive independently, and only when they reached the line of the Western Bug River did they closely cooperate with the remaining *front* forces.

The observation posts of formation commanders were as close as possible to the troops. For example, the division commander's observation post was set up 500–1,000 meters from the jumping-off position for the attack; the corps commander's post was two kilometers away; and the army commander's post was 2.5–3 kilometers away. In some places special observation towers were constructed for the convenience of surveillance. An operational group consisting of officers from the operations, intelligence, and coding sections worked directly under the army commander.

Taking into consideration the forthcoming forward movement, the army headquarters created forward command posts headed by a deputy army commander. These consisted of an operational group of officers from the operations, intelligence, and coding sections; officer-representatives from artillery, armor, and engineer staffs; and a communications center headed by a senior assistant chief of army communications.

All telegraph and telephone lines had undergone capital repair by the beginning of the operation. A necessary reserve of communications equipment had been created at *front* and army headquarters to ensure the organization of continuous communications as the command posts moved forward. Army communications units were provided with 160–170 per cent of their authorized communications equipment.

The *front*'s telegraph communications with the armies' headquarters was maintained along two channels, specifically, *Bodo* and ST-35. The main command post of the *front*'s headquarters post had *Bodo* telegraph communications with the auxiliary command post along two lines. In addition, the main command post had direct telephone communications on a single line with the 65th and 28th Armies. The auxiliary command post also had telephone communications along two channels with the 3d and 48th Armies, and along one channel with the 65th and 28th Armies.

The wooded and swampy nature of the terrain and the presence of a large number of rivers flowing meridionally presented special requirements for troop preparation.

Preparation of infantry

The infantry practiced swimming, overcoming water obstacles using available means and without them, the erection of assault bridges, and the use of inflatable boats in specially allocated sectors in the immediate rear. During the preparation, great attention was focused on training individual soldiers and entire sub-units in overcoming swampy sectors, orienting themselves in the forests, and moving along an azimuth. The training of tactical sub-units and units was conducted on the basis of the themes 'Attacks by a Rifle Company, Battalion, and Regiment in Wooded and Swampy Terrain' and 'Infantry Assaults Behind a Firing Barrage'.

During the preparatory period, the forces prepared a large number of swamp vessels, swamp skis, travois [portages] for machine-guns and light artillery, boats, etc.

Preparation of artillery

Reinforcing artillery equipment was covertly deployed in the immediate rear area during the preparatory period. Gun crews in regions, which had been designated for the emplacement of artillery at the beginning of the offensive, prepared firing positions, and individual guns conducted ranging. For two days before the offensive began, all artillery was brought forward and occupied its positions at night.

Army artillery staff officers directed the arrival of artillery at its firing positions. During the preparation, artillery officers worked with the infantry, studied the battlefield, directed target and line ranging, and coordinated cooperation with combined-arms sub-units and tanks. All field artillery and divisional guns designated to accompany the infantry were distributed in advance by company and battalion.

Preparation of tanks

During the preparatory period, tankers [*tankisty*] focused their primary attention on studying the enemy defense, in particular, his antitank system. While participating in reconnaissance with combined-arms sub-units and sappers, the tankers established the location of enemy minefields and swampy areas, determined the most accessible sectors for tank crossings over the river, etc. Passages made in the minefields were clearly indicated long before the offensive. Tank company and battalion commanders with their crews personally conducted commander's reconnaissances of each axis and assigned missions to tank crews on the spot. The sectors designated for tank crossings over the river were protected by a large number of accompanying guns.

All crews conducted exercises in driving tanks in night conditions, in the forest, in swamps, and in conditions of overcoming corduroy roads. Tank equipment had been brought to full combat readiness by the time the offensive began. Each tank had its own fascine and logs for overcoming obstacles, and special tripods [wood frames] for overcoming wide ditches. Infantrymen and sappers were assigned to each tank and self-propelled gun sub-unit.

Representatives from the supporting artillery were assigned to the tank units with the mission of controlling firing from tanks during battle in the depth. In addition, representatives from the 16th Air Army headquarters accompanied the tank corps.

Preparation of aviation

One of the primary missions of aviation was to study the enemy defense, his artillery deployment, and the location of reserves and airfields. To this end, during June there were up to 20 reconnaissance aircraft in the air every day systematically surveying enemy territory and photographing the disposition of his defense. The results of this work were already mentioned above. All detected targets were plotted on a map and distributed among aviation formations by the time the offensive began. Air reconnaissance was conducted over the entire front to maintain the secrecy of the main attack axis.

Simultaneously with reconnaissance, *frontal* aviation systematically bombed enemy combat formations and railroad junctions. The Bobruisk, Osipovichi, Slutsk, and Starye Dorogi junctions were subjected to particularly strong air attacks, as were Baranovichi, Slonim, and Volkovysk. Our aviation transferred its efforts to the forward edge of the enemy defense and artillery firing positions two days before the offensive began. U-2 aircraft systematically dropped bombs every night, thus exhausting the enemy.

During the offensive preparations, only those air units needed for work were located at operational airfields. The 16th Air Army's main forces were located at airfields considerably distant from the front (to avoid unnecessary losses), and were re-based to forward airfields only two to three days before the commencement of the offensive.

Preparation of engineer forces

Sappers accomplished a great deal of work. They removed 34,465 enemy antitank and anti-personnel mines, 76 booby traps, and 132 land mines during the 20 days of June. They made 193 passages for tanks and infantry on our main attack axis. They erected and prepared for erection (upon the commencement of the offensive) 42 crossings over the Drut' and Dnepr Rivers. During May and June sappers constructed 15 crossings with a freight capacity of 60 tons each, eight with a 30–ton capacity, and two with a 16-ton capacity, as well as a large number of corduroy tread-ways and leveled roads to support the force regrouping and rear area operations. To this end, unloading from the Gomel' railhead, which was constantly under enemy air attack, was carried out by the construction of two crossings, one over the Sozh River north of Gomel', and the other to the south over the Dnepr.

The forces, which were designated to force large water obstacles, were supplied with crossing equipment. Table 10 shows the equipment supplied to the armies on 23 June:

TABLE 10. RIVER-CROSSING EQUIPMENT IN 1ST BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S ARMIES

Equipment	*3d Army*	*48th Army*	*65th Army*	*28th Army*
Small inflatable boats	175	175	151	100
Collapsible assault boats	266	116	100	50
A-3 boats	113	110	104	75
UVSA boats	4	4	2	2
TMP parks	–	–	–	–
N-P parks	5	1	–	–
DMP-41 parks	–	1	–	–
NLP parks	1	1	1	1
Captured 'B'-type parks	–	4	–	–

Regrouping of forces

The regrouping of forces was conducted in accordance with the operational plan. The 3d Army sharply reduced its front, and its left flank occupied the region north of Rogachev. It included the 9th Tank Corps, the 23d Antiaircraft Division, two high-power artillery brigades, and a number of reinforcing artillery regiments. The army's frontage was 53 kilometers.

The 48th Army extended its front up to 98 kilometers to the north to include the city of Rogachev.

The 65th Army, which had earlier defended the sector from Zdudichi to the Pripiat' River along with fortified region units, reduced its front toward the right flank almost threefold, and occupied a 28-kilometer sector (from Zdudichi to Korma).

To the south, the 28th Army, which had arrived from the reserve of the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command, was inserted between the 65th and 61st Armies.

The 4th Guards Cavalry Corps, the 1st Guards Don Tank Corps, and the 1st Mechanized Corps were moved up into the 65th and 28th Armies' sectors. The 4th Artillery Corps' main forces also arrived here.

The Dnepr River Flotilla (the 1st Brigade of River Boats) was concentrated on 22 June in the Shatsilki region on the Berezina River.

Correlation of forces

As a result of the regrouping and concentration of fresh forces from the reserve of the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command, the correlation of forces by the end of 23 June was as shown in Table 11:

TABLE 11. CORRELATION OF FORCES IN THE 1ST BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S SECTOR (LENGTH OF THE FRONT-240 KILOMETERS)

Enemy			*Our Forces*		
Overall	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Forces and weaponry*	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Overall*	*Superiority over the enemy*
13	17 kms front per division	Divisions	6 kms front per division	39	3:1
156,830	653	Combat personnel	1,314	315,346	2:1
9,176	38	Machine guns	61	14,594	1.6:1
1,010	4.2	Mortars	12.7	3,048	3:1
743	3.1	Antitank guns	6.7	1,613	2.2:1

865	3.6	Field guns (76mm and up)	11	2,647	3:1
110	.5	Tanks and self-propelled guns	3.7	896	8:1
350	–	Aircraft	–	2,033	5.81

As Table 12 shows, the correlation of forces was even more in our favor along the main attack axis.

TABLE 12. CORRELATION OF FORCES IN THE 1ST BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S MAIN ATTACK AXES ON 23 JUNE 1944

(A) *North of Rogachev (13-kilometer penetration front)*

Enemy			*Our Forces*		
Overall	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Forces and weaponry*	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Overall*	*Superiority over the enemy*
2	6.5 kms front per division	Divisions	1 km front per division	13	6.5:1
13,730	1,056	Combat personnel	4,505	58,563	4.3:1
271	21	Machine guns	183	2,382	8.8:1
80	6	Mortars	70	908	11.3:1
50	4	Antitank guns	30	387	7.7:1
74	6	Field guns (76mm and up)	65	846	11.4:1
65	5	Tanks and self-propelled guns	31.7	412	6.3:1
–	–	Aircraft	–	1,242	–

(B) *South of Parichi (15-kilometer penetration front)*

Enemy			*Our Forces*		
Overall	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Forces and weaponry*	*Density per 1 km of front*	*Overall*	*Superiority over the enemy*
1	15kms front per division	Divisions	1.3–1.4 kms front per division	11	11:1
8,900	593	Combat personnel	3,440	51,600	5.8:1
337	22.5	Machine-guns	194.5	2,918	8.7:1
75	5	Mortars	66.8	1,002	13.4:1
64	4.3	Antitank guns	22.2	333	5.2:1
74	5	Field guns (76mm and up)	108	1,623	22:1
25	1.7	Tanks and self-propelled guns	26.3	394	16:1
–	–	Aircraft	–	791	–

Thus, the penetration of the enemy defense was planned for a 28-kilometer sector out of a total frontage of 240 kilometers. A total of 24 infantry divisions (62 per cent), 806 tanks and self-propelled guns (90 per cent), 2,469 field guns (division, corps and high command reserve artillery (93 per cent), and 1,910 mortars (63 per cent) were concentrated on the main attack axis.

Material-technical support

Rations of foodstuffs and forage for 10–15 days had been delivered to the forces by the time the operation began, as had 4.5 combat loads of ammunition and three POL refuelings.

The *front* allocated 1,790 motor vehicles with a load capacity of 4,170 tons to ensure the continuous supply of food and ammunition to the troops during the battle.

Medical support

Front hospital bases with 5,320 beds were deployed in the immediate rear area. In addition, there were reserve bases with 5,000 beds. Twelve temporary medical trains and one temporary ambulance train were outfitted to evacuate the wounded by railroad.

The 1st Belorussian Front's forces were completely prepared for the offensive as a result of the enormous preparatory work that was accomplished.

CONCLUSIONS

While these measures were being implemented to prepare for the offensive, the enemy also strengthened himself somewhat since he anticipated the beginning of summer operations. The enemy's preparations for a stubborn defense in Belorussia were reflected in the following measures:

1. Internal regrouping of forces to conduct defensive operations;
2. Reinforcement of the most important axes, from the Germans' point of view, with personnel and equipment;
3. Creation of operational and tactical reserves;
4. Improvement of fortifications along the forward edge and the creation of defensive positions on the most crucial (from the enemy perspective) axes in the operational depth;
5. Reinforcement of formation and unit antitank defenses (new types of weaponry);
6 Withdrawal of several divisions into the reserve for replenishment and regeneration;
7 Replenishment of material in tank and artillery units and formations;
8. Improvement of the defensive system and defensive combat tactics, primarily for close battle; and
9. Measures for strengthening soldier morale.

Newly replenished and manned German divisions totaling 50–52 faced the forces of our 1st Baltic, 3d Belorussian, 2d Belorussian, and 1st Belorussian Fronts north of the Pripiat'. These relied on a well-developed system of defensive positions. Up to 35 of the stronger and more technically equipped of these divisions were located in the first line.

The German command had five field divisions, 10–12 training-field, reserve, and security divisions (the latter doing security-occupation service), and a large number of separate regiments in the second line and in deep reserve. Counting these forces, there were up to 15–17 divisions in the second line and rear. However, only five divisions (three infantry, one panzer, and one panzer grenadier) were completely combat-ready and suitable for active counter-maneuver in case the main line of the German defense was penetrated. The other units and formations could be used only for limited missions. The defense's operational density was around 14 kilometers per division. The overall strength of German forces opposing our forces in Belorussia was around one million men, 7,000 guns, 1,300 airplanes, several hundred tanks, etc.

The *Stavka* of the Red Army's Supreme High Command focused great attention on its offensive preparations. Its representatives, Marshals of the Soviet Union G.K.Zhukov and

A.M.Vasilevsky, monitored the course of work on the ground, directing it in accordance with the plan of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, personally verified troop combat preparation, and immediately corrected detected shortcomings on the spot.

The preparations for the large-scale strategic operation in Belorussia had been completed by 22 June 1944. The forces had been regrouped and large reserves were concentrated on the principal operational axes. Four armies (the 6th and 11th Guards, the 28th, and the 5th Guards Tank Armies) had been regrouped to new axes or brought forward from the *Stavka* reserve. The Belorussian strategic axis was reinforced with 25 rifle divisions, eight tank and mechanized corps, two cavalry corps, a large number of artillery formations from the Reserve of the High Command, aviation, and other types of combat equipment, as well as with support troops during the preparatory period for the operation. Large reserves of ammunition, fuel, and various types of supplies were delivered to bases and depots to support the planned offensive.

By the beginning of June, the German command had already become aware of the Red Army's operational preparations against Army Group Center from various intelligence sources. It was even more or less aware of the time that the offensive would begin. However, the German command reckoned on only limited-scale Soviet actions and did not consider the possibility that blows of great force would be inflicted in Belorussia, since it assumed that the main Red Army attack in the summer of 1944 would be to the south. Therefore, our great summer offensive in Belorussia turned out to be unexpected for the enemy with respect to its power, speed, and scope.

3
Beginning of the Soviet Offensive
Penetration of the German Defense (First Stage of the Operation, 23–28 June)

Our forward (reconnaissance) sub-units, supported by artillery and tanks, were already performing boldly and successfully on the eve of the general offensive. They had even succeeded in penetrating the enemy defense in a number of sectors.

After a powerful artillery and air preparation, the 1st Baltic, 2d Belorussian and 3d Belorussian Fronts' main forces advanced to assault the enemy's fortifications along the Vitebsk, Bogushevsk, Orsha, and Mogilev axes on the morning of 23 June. The 1st Belorussian Front shifted to a decisive offensive along the Bobruisk axis on the following day.

One of the greatest operations of the Great Patriotic War, which extended across an enormous front of about 600 kilometers to the north of the Pripiat', had begun. Fifteen of our armies from four *fronts*, operating in accordance with a single Supreme High Command plan, participated in this offensive operation.

Force operations, which included penetration of fortified enemy positions, exploitation of achieved success, encirclement and destruction of the German Vitebsk and Bobruisk groupings, and defeat of the Orsha and Mogilev groupings, sought to resolve the important initial missions faced by the armies and *fronts* on their path to achieving the overall aim—the utter defeat of the Germans in Belorussia. In the aggregate, the force operations described in this chapter constitute the first stage of this great operation, which encompasses the period 23–28 June.

1ST BALTIC FRONT'S PENETRATION OF THE GERMAN DEFENSES NORTHWEST OF VITEBSK AND FORCING OF THE WESTERN DVINA RIVER

Combat operations by reconnaissance detachments

Following a 20-minute artillery preparation, the reconnaissance detachments (two or three rifle companies from each division) began combat operations at 0500 hours on 22 June. The greatest success during this combat was achieved in the sector of the 6th Guards Army's 22d Guards Rifle Corps. The reconnaissance detachments had already succeeded in capturing the villages of Savchenki and Dvorishche on the corps' right flank and had penetrated to the enemy's trenches on the left flank by 1000 hours. One rifle battalion from each regiment was introduced at 1000 hours to exploit success. Supported by artillery and aviation, [these] battalions broke through the main defensive belt, and

had reached the Savchenki, Morgi, and Pligovki line by 2000 hours, having penetrated to a depth of four-seven kilometers. The 23d Guards Rifle Corps' reconnaissance detachments advanced 200–250 meters during the day, and captured the first trench in a number of sectors. Reconnaissance detachments on the 43d Army's penetration front succeeded in capturing the village of Medved' and the first trench east of Zabolotniki.

Combat operations to exploit success continued on the night of 23 June. A number of villages in the 6th Guards Army's offensive sector were successfully captured, including Sirotino, a large center of resistance. The apparent success in the 22d Guards Rifle Corps' sector was quickly exploited. The 22d Guards Rifle Corps' combat formations had already advanced four-six kilometers by the end of 22 June. The arrival of the 22d Guards Corps at the Savchenki, Morgi, and Pligovki line threatened the German IX Army Corps' left flank and rear. The German command was forced to transfer part of the corps' tactical reserves to the region east of Obol'. To a considerable degree, this fortuitous circumstance contributed significantly to the fact that the 6th Guards Army's forces and the 43d Army's right flank succeeded in penetrating the enemy defense relatively easily to its entire depth on the first day of our offensive (23 June).

Penetration of enemy's defense and arrival of our forces at the Western Dvina River

Because the tactical depth of the German defenses in the 22d Rifle Corps' offensive sector had been penetrated and several trench sectors on the 23d Guards and 1st Rifle Corps' front had been captured, and because the enemy's defenses along the penetration front had been generally weakened, the command decided to alter its plan for the artillery offensive. These changes basically amounted to the following.

The time allocated for the artillery preparation in the 6th Guards Army was shortened, and the quantity of artillery to be used in the preparation was reduced by up to 50 per cent. The artillery offensive in the 43d Army's 1st Rifle Corps began as an accompaniment to the attack period, while in the 60th Rifle Corps it began during the suppression period. Subsequent combat operations demonstrated that the changes in the original plan for the artillery offensive corresponded to the concrete situation and justified themselves during the battle.

The 1st Baltic Front's shock group launched its offensive after the artillery and air preparation on the morning of 23 June (the 6th Guards Army at 0600 hours and the 43d Army an hour later). Supported by direct support tanks, artillery, and aviation, the infantry penetrated the enemy defense on the Savchenki and Uzhliatina front (30 kilometers) and rapidly began to exploit success to the southwest. The enemy attempted to resist the advancing forces by fire and infantry counterattacks in from company to battalion strength, supported by small tank groups (three-eight vehicles each). Resistance was particularly stubborn in the regions of Rovenets, Dobrino, and Shumilino. The enemy's strong center of resistance in Shumilino was successfully enveloped from the flanks and the rear by a bold flank maneuver by the 1st Rifle Corps (of the 43d Army) units, cooperating with the 71st Guards Rifle Division (of the 6th Guards Army). Our forces captured Shumilino after a brief battle. The enemy was partly destroyed and partly taken prisoner.

The operational plan envisioned the commitment of the 1st Tank Corps into the penetration on the very first day of battle from the line of the Polotsk-Vitebsk railroad in the general direction of Beshenkovichi. Using three march routes, the tank corps began moving from its waiting area (which was located 14–18 kilometers from the forward edge) to the jumping-off position at 1000 hours on 23 June. The roads became difficult to traverse following a rainstorm, and tank movement in the swampy terrain off the roads was impossible. Therefore, the tank corps advanced slowly, and it had hardly reached the Morgi, Parshino, and Shumilino line by the time darkness fell. By this time, the advancing infantry with supporting tanks was already fighting for the inter-lake defiles west and southwest of Shumilino. Because of the considerable tardiness of the tank corps' arrival and the presence of inter-lake defiles, its further advance was inexpedient.

Consequently, at 2310 hours on 23 June, the *front* commander ordered that 'the 1st Tank Corps' units are not to be committed into the penetration until the infantry has reached the Pushchevye, Lake Dobeevskoe, and Pisarevo line.' The *front* commander permitted the tank corps to be committed only after the infantry had surmounted the inter-lake defiles northeast of Lake Dobeevskoe.

While developing an aggressive offensive, the forces of the 6th Guards Army and the 43d Army's right flank had repelled 19 enemy counterattacks, surmounted the inter-lake defiles north of Lake Dobeevskoe, and reached the Savchenki, Rovenets, Pushchevye, Lake Dobeevskoe, Ladoshki, and Uzhliatina line by the end of the day. The greatest success this day was noted at the contiguous flanks of the 6th Guards and 43d Armies. The 23d Guards and 1st Rifle Corps had advanced up to 16 kilometers. On the right flank, the 22d Guards Corps advanced two-seven kilometers while overcoming the stubborn resistance of enemy tactical reserves that had arrived the night before.

The 29th Rifle Division (of the 103d Rifle Corps) was introduced into the junction between the 22d and 23d Guards Rifle Corps during the second half of 23 June; the 103d Rifle Corps' 270th Rifle Division advanced with the 29th Rifle Division's combat formations. The 2d Guards Rifle Corps had concentrated in the Parshino, Galeny, and Chernitsy region by day's end.

Cloudiness and intermittent rain restricted the 3d Air Army's combat operations. Our aviation conducted 746 sorties during the day, of which 435 assaulted the enemy's combat formations. Enemy aviation on this day conducted only reconnaissance flights in individual aircraft.

Thus, the *front*'s shock group had already managed to achieve great tactical successes on the first day of the operation. The German IX Army Corps (the 252d and 56th Infantry Divisions) was defeated, and its units abandoned their combat equipment and swiftly withdrew to the western and southern banks of the Western Dvina River. The German command attempted to occupy a defense in the Obol' region and along the Western Dvina River, using the forces of these withdrawing units and reserves which had been brought forward, so as to prevent further widening of the penetration. The *front* command decided to move up powerful forward detachments, reinforced by tanks, to impede German occupation of a defense along the Western Dvina River and to capture a bridgehead on the river's western bank from the march.

The 1st Baltic Front's offensive developed at its previous tempo on 24 June. Our forces repelled up to 27 counterattacks during the day by enemy forces in from company to battalion strength, widened the penetration up to 90 kilometers along the front, and

advanced 15–20 kilometers into the depth. Overcoming enemy resistance, the 6th Guards Army had advanced two-three kilometers with its right flank (the 22d Guards Rifle Corps) by the end of the day, while its center and left flank (the 103d and 23d Guards Rifle Corps) reached the Western Dvina. Army forward detachments forced the Western Dvina from the march and captured small bridgeheads in the regions of Labeiki, Tserkovishche, and Bystraia (east of Tserkovishche) on the river's western bank. The 2d Guards Corps, which was advancing behind the 23d Guards Corps' combat formations, had concentrated in the Kovalevshchina, Noviki, and Vishnevka region by the end of the day.

While continuing its offensive to the southwest, the 43d Army had reached the Western Dvina's northern bank on a front from Noviki to Sharylino by the end of the day. The 1st Rifle Corps' units captured small bridgeheads in the regions of Mil'kovichi, Sharylino, and Zabor'e on the Western Dvina's southern bank.

On the 43d Army's left flank, units of the 92d Rifle Corps succeeded in penetrating the German defense on the Skviria and Khrapovichi front during the second half of 24 June, and they had reached the Rubiny, Kasalapinki, and Talynovo line (eight kilometers north of Vitebsk) by the end of the day. The 4th Shock Army was unsuccessful on the right flank of the penetration. Units of the 360th Rifle Division succeeded in only marginally penetrating the enemy defense in the Rovnoe region and to the south during the day.

As mentioned above, the 1st Tank Corps was to be committed into battle on the morning of 24 June after the infantry had surmounted the inter-lake defiles northeast of Lake Dobeevskoe. The corps' units began movement forward from the Morgi, Parshino, and Shumilino line at 0800 hours. The tanks moved under very difficult conditions. The few roads became difficult to traverse after the rain, while the movement of tank columns along the wooded and swampy terrain off the roads was impossible. One should add that the enemy had burned almost all the bridges on the roads, their repair was proceeding with considerable delay, and the traffic regulation service was unreliable. In this situation, when the 6th Guards and 43d Armies' first echelons were approaching the Western Dvina while attempting to develop the offensive swiftly, the attacking forces' combat trains, the second echelons, and the artillery, tanks, and pontoon units were moving in their wake. As a result of the large-scale and inadequately organized traffic, the roads were extremely congested, and there were numerous traffic jams. Much labor was required to eliminate them and permit the tanks, artillery, and pontoon parks to advance. The tank corps' units had reached the Western Dvina in the region east of Uzrech'e by the end of the day, and had begun preparations for forcing the river.

The improved weather on 24 June made it possible for our aviation to operate more actively. The 3d Air Army conducted 1,127 sorties during the day. Enemy aviation managed only up to 50 sorties this day.

Thus, during the two days of the offensive, the 6th Guards and 43d Armies widened the penetration up to 90 kilometers along the front and advanced 25–30 kilometers into the depth, capturing bridgeheads on the Western Dvina's left bank and liberating more than 500 populated areas. Successful operations by the 60th Rifle Corps (43d Army) and the 5th Guards Corps (39th Army) made it possible for them to reach the enemy Vitebsk grouping's rear area by the end of the offensive's second day. Attempting to avert the catastrophe hanging over its Vitebsk grouping, stop our offensive on the Obol'-Polotsk

axis, and prevent our forces from forcing the Western Dvina, the German command quickly began to bring forward its reserves. The 81st and 290th Infantry Divisions were removed from the Idritsa axis and transferred to the Polotsk axis; the 201st and 221st Security Divisions, and many sapper-construction, security, penal, and other special units were brought up to the line of the Western Dvina River. In addition, the 212th Infantry Division was brought forward from Pskov.

Forcing of the Western Dvina River and widening of the captured bridgeheads

Since it did not expect its TO&E [establishment] crossing means to arrive, the forces operating along the contiguous flanks of the 6th Guards and 43d Armies quickly set about forcing the Western Dvina and widening the captured bridgeheads. They employed various materials collected and prepared directly on the spot for the crossing of infantry and light weapons. Regimental and division artillery, as well as a portion of the antitank artillery regiments and light-gun artillery brigades, crossed on improvised on-hand means (such as rafts) prepared by the artillery units themselves.

While repelling counterattacks and overcoming stubborn enemy resistance, on 25 June the 23d Guards Rifle Corps' units continued to cross troops and equipment to the opposite river bank and widen the captured bridgeheads.

Attempting to delay our offensive on the Western Dvina in any way possible, the German command hurriedly brought sapper-construction, security, and other special units and sub-units forward to the river. Corps units located in the bridgeheads were subjected to numerous enemy counterattacks.

Regimental artillery, which crossed together with infantry by all available means, and gun batteries from the antitank artillery battalions and units played a great role in repelling the enemy counterattacks. This artillery was employed primarily in a direct fire role.

Corps units continued to convey the infantry and combat equipment across by improvised means all day long on 25 June. Attempts to force the river in the 51st Guards Division's sector were unsuccessful. Here the Germans succeeded in firmly fortifying the Western Dvina's southern bank. The 71st Guards Division's sub-units also did not succeed in widening the bridgehead seized on the eve of the offensive.

Consequently, the corps commander decided to cross units of the 51st and 71st Guards Rifle Divisions in the 67th Division's sector. The sub-sequent course of combat operations demonstrated that this decision was most expedient in the existing situation. The corps succeeded not only in forcing the Western Dvina in this region, but also in considerably widening the bridgehead captured the previous day.

While forcing the river, special difficulties arose in connection with the crossing by artillery and tanks. The pontoon parks were lagging behind, and the steep banks made it difficult to set up ferries. However, these difficulties were overcome, and the pontoon crossings had been erected by the end of 25 June, after which the transfer of artillery and tanks accelerated considerably. The crossing of artillery units' matériel was organized so that one-third crossed while the fire of the other two-thirds supported troop operations on the opposite bank. After crossing the river, the artillery quickly took up firing positions

within the infantry's combat formations and supported their operations with fire and maneuver, and also protected the antitank defenses in the captured bridgeheads.

The battles to widen the bridgeheads were fierce. The enemy counterattacked continuously throughout the day. Thus, a battalion of German infantry from the region north of Beshenkovichi, supported by 30 tanks, counterattacked the 71st Guards Rifle Division's units at 1400 hours. The enemy attack was repelled and he suffered heavy losses.

An enemy force of up to two battalions supported by tanks counterattacked at 1620 hours against the 67th Guards Rifle Division units. However, this counterattack was also repelled. The enemy exhibited particular activity west of Labeiki. The 199th Guards Rifle Regiment, which had captured a bridgehead in this region, repelled nine enemy infantry and tank counterattacks during the day. Throughout subsequent battles the regiment was pressed back to the river's eastern bank in the Labeiki region.

Units of the 23d Guards Corps repelled fierce enemy counterattacks at the main bridgehead. Two of the corps' divisions had reached the Zatish'e, Svecha, and Zherebikovo line by the end of 25 June. The 71st Guards Rifle Division, cooperating with the 46th Guards Division (of the 2d Guards Rifle Corps), the 44th Motorized Rifle Brigade, and units of the 1st Rifle Corps (of the 43d Army), succeeded in capturing Beshenkovichi by the end of 25 June. [However], we were not successful in capturing a bridgehead from the march on the 270th Rifle Division's (of the 103d Rifle Corps) front. Therefore, 25 June was used to prepare forces and crossing equipment to force a crossing and to bring up artillery which had lagged behind.

After the 43d Army's shock group had reached the Western Dvina and captured bridgeheads on its southern bank, an urgent mission confronted the army's formations: to complete the encirclement of the enemy's Vitebsk grouping together with the 39th Army's forces, and widen and consolidate captured bridgeheads on the southern bank. Army forces successfully resolved both assigned missions during combat on the night of 24–25 June, and during the day on 25 June.

Formations of the 43d Army's shock group did not expect the arrival of organic crossing means. Therefore, they swiftly set about forcing the Western Dvina by improvised means.

In addition to the infantry, a considerable portion of the light infantry also managed to cross on available means. The remaining artillery and tanks employed their fire to cover the infantry's assault across the river until ferries and bridge crossings were ready. With the arrival at the river of N2P and NLP parks,[1] the assembly of 30-ton bridge ferries (from N2Ps) and 16-ton ferries (from NLPs) commenced. As a result of the readiness of these ferries and their introduction into the bridge line, infantry and artillery swiftly crossed over them.

A tank crossing was constructed in the Sharylino region at 1500 hours on 25 June. That day, tank units from the 10th Guards Tank Brigade crossed to the river's southern bank. The tank brigade's sub-units received the mission to be prepared to repel possible enemy counterattacks southeast of Gnezdilovichi.

While continuing to transport their personnel and equipment across the river, the 1st Rifle Corps' units widened bridgeheads captured the previous day on the southern bank. Two of the corps' rifle divisions (the 306th and 179th) reached the Beshenkovichi,

Zagriad'e, and Bereshevtsy line by the end of 25 June. The 357th Rifle Division (the corps' second echelon) was located in the forested region north of Bokishevo.

During combat to widen the bridgeheads, corps units had to repel numerous enemy counterattacks. The fact that the rifle regiments' artillery and mortars crossed to the river's southern bank in timely fashion played a significant role in widening and consolidating the bridgeheads, and also in repelling counterattacks.

The 334th Rifle Division succeeded in forcing the Western Dvina in the 60th Rifle Corps' offensive sector on the same day, and had reached the line extending from Gnezdilovichi to the eastern outskirts of the forests north of Terebetovka by the close of 25 June. Corps units linked up with the 39th Army's 5th Guards Corps in the Gnezdilovichi region. Developing the offensive to the northeast, the 60th Rifle Corps' 235th Rifle Division was fighting north of Staroe Selo by the end of the day.

Pursuing the withdrawing enemy, the 92d Rifle Corps' units were fighting west of Vitebsk.

The transport of tanks and heavy artillery across the river fared worse. The pontoon units, which were inadequately supplied with transport and jammed with tanks and artillery that had been advancing toward the river on 24 and 25 June, lagged behind considerably. The command had to exert great efforts to assemble transport means on the march and bring the [pontoon] parks forward to the river. It was necessary to expropriate a portion of the tank corps' transport vehicles to do so. Ferries with 30–60 ton capacities were constructed in the Ulla, Uzrech'e, and Beshenkovichi regions during the first half of 26 June. The crossing of the tank corps to the opposite bank on these ferries commenced only at 1600 hours on 25 June and continued until 1700 on 26 June.

After capturing and consolidating bridgeheads on the western and southern banks of the Western Dvina, and after completing the encirclement of the enemy's Vitebsk grouping, the *front* commander assigned the armies the following missions:

- The 6th Guards Army was to accelerate its advance toward Kamen' at dawn on 26 June, and use its main forces to capture the Makarovshchina, Pristoi line by the end of the day; and
- While continuing to destroy the enemy's Vitebsk grouping in cooperation with the 39th Army, the 43d Army was to use no fewer than three-four divisions with reinforcements to develop the offensive on the Western Dvina's southern bank in the general direction of Makarovichi, Boiary, and Pristoi. They were to reach the Podrezy and Malyi Vedren' line by the end of 26 June.

Overcoming stubborn enemy resistance, the *front* shock group forced the Svechanka and Ulla Rivers on 26 June and advanced 10–20 kilometers. The enemy fiercely resisted our advance on the Obol', Ulla, and Bocheikovo front with the remnants of the defeated divisions, and also committed into battle units from new divisions (the 290th Infantry and 221st Security). We repelled up to 30 counterattacks during the day, each involving forces from infantry battalion to regimental strength supported by 10–12 tanks. Enemy aviation, as in previous days, was not active; around 30 sorties were made during the day.

The 6th Guards Army continued the offensive, forcing the Western Dvina, Ulla, and Svechanka Rivers on 26 June. The 270th Rifle Division (of the 103d Rifle Corps) began to force the Western Dvina in the morning. It had managed to cross the bulk of the division to the opposite river bank and capture Ulla by 0900 hours. By day's end, the

division had forced the Ulla River from the march and reached the Koraneva and Bortniki line. The 154th Rifle Division, which had arrived from the *front* reserve, became part of the 103d Rifle Corps. The 23d Guards Rifle Corps forced the Ulla River from the march and advanced to the Bortniki and Zaruchev'e line. The 2d Guards Rifle Corps, which had been introduced into battle on the morning of 26 June, captured (together with units of the 1st Tank Corps) the large German strong point of Bocheikovo, and had reached the Dolostsy, Bocheikovo, and Podrezy line by the end of the day.

Using its right flank to continue to develop the offensive on the Lepel' axis, a portion of the 43d Army's forces destroyed the enemy's encircled Vitebsk grouping in cooperation with the 39th Army (of the 3d Belorussian Front).

The 4th Shock Army's left flank was moderately successful on the same day. After unsuccessful attacks on the previous day, the 360th Rifle Division managed to penetrate the enemy's defense and capture the village of Rovnoe.

Thus, the 1st Baltic Front's forces successfully accomplished the complex mission of forcing a large water obstacle (the Western Dvina, with a width of 150–170 meters) on 25 and 26 June, as well as smaller rivers such as the Ulla and Svechanka, and created a bridgehead with a depth of up to 18 kilometers.

Development of the offensive along the Lepel' axis

The 1st Baltic Front's forces developed the offensive westward on 27 and 28 June. While continuing his withdrawal, the enemy offered strong fire resistance, especially in the Obol' region and in the inter-lake defiles northwest of Bocheikovo. Overcoming the enemy resistance, the 4th Shock Army used its left flank (the 199th and 360th Rifle Divisions) to reach the Lipniki and Shalomino line by the end of the day. The 4th Shock Army command regrouped on 28 June to create a shock group on the army's left flank necessary for the subsequent offensive against Polotsk. On the same day, the 100th Rifle Corps (the 21st Guards, 28th, and 200th Rifle Divisions) became part of the army. The corps had begun to concentrate in the Glukhaia, Zal'khova, and Gorovatka region by the end of the day.

The 22d Guards Rifle Corps was subordinated directly to the *front* command on 26 June. The corps' units succeeded in capturing the enemy's large strong point at Obol' on 27 June.

The 6th Guards Army was fighting along the Ushaly, Uboina, Kiseli, Rybaki, Zaozer'e, Shcherbenki, and Vashkovo line by the end of 28 June, while struggling to overcome the inter-lake defiles north of Kamen'. The 43d Army captured the important strong point and highway junction of Lepel' by storm on 28 June, while developing the offensive in cooperation with one tank brigade from General Osilkovsky's group [the cavalrymechanized group] (of the 3d Belorussian Front). By this time the 179th Rifle Division was located along the Pozharishche, Gorodets, and Chernogost'e line, having completely liquidated separate enemy groups east of Starodvortsy. The 60th and 92d Rifle Corps were marching in the direction of Lepel' after having liquidated the enemy's Vitebsk grouping in cooperation with the 39th Army. During the march the 60th Rifle Corps was enlisted to liquidate a group of Germans commanded by General Pistorius, which had broken out of encirclement.

After crossing the Ulla River, the 1st Tank Corps used part of its forces, together with the 2d Guards Corps' forces, to capture the powerful enemy strong point at Kamen' on 28 June.

Thus, the 1st Baltic Front, under the command of Army-General Bagramian, successfully accomplished the mission assigned to it by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief in a period of six days. During this period the *front* shock group penetrated the enemy defense, destroyed (together with the 3d Belorussian Front) his Vitebsk grouping, forced the Western Dvina, Svechanka, and Ulla Rivers, and, having advanced more than 80 kilometers on the left flank, occupied the enemy strong points of Beshenkovichi and Lepel'. Throughout this time, the 1st Baltic Front's forces destroyed more than 25,000 enemy soldiers and officers and much combat equipment, including 322 guns, 1,026 motor vehicles, and 51 airplanes. In addition, our forces took more than 5,000 enemy soldiers and officers prisoner, and captured 474 guns, 1,093 machine-guns, and 1,424 motor vehicles.

The 6th Guards Army's forces under the command of Colonel-General Chistiakov and the 43d Army's forces under the command of LieutenantGeneral Beloborodov particularly distinguished themselves during this stage of the operation by executing all their assigned missions. The 1st Tank Corps was unable to penetrate into the operational space [depth]. Throughout the six days it moved behind the infantry combat formations, lingered at river crossings, crammed the roads, and, as a result, was unable to provide what would have been expected had it been better employed. This example of tank corps operations during the first stage of the operation also clearly demonstrates the consequences of inadequate engineer support for tanks when they are moving along bad roads and when the forcing of rivers is anticipated.

PENETRATION OF GERMAN DEFENSE BY 3D BELORUSSIAN FRONT: DESTRUCTION OF ENEMY'S VITEBSK AND ORSHA GROUPINGS

Penetration of enemy defense along the Bogushevsk, Vitebsk, and Orsha axes

The 3d Belorussian Front's general offensive was designated for the morning of 23 June. However, the forward battalions of the 5th Army's firstechelon divisions, supported by powerful artillery fire, had already shifted to the offensive during the second half of 22 June with the mission of capturing and consolidating the enemy's first trench line and disclosing the tactical depth of his defense.

The 5th Army's forward battalions penetrated to the first German trench line by surprise and a coordinated strike, captured it, and, while exploiting success, extended the penetration two-four kilometers. As a result, the 72d and 65th Rifle Corps' forward battalions on the main attack axis overcame not only the first trench with all the obstacles which had been constructed in front of it, but also captured the second and third trenches. The enemy attempted to re-establish his position through counterattacks by infantry groups reinforced with tanks, but was unsuccessful. While repelling these counterattacks, the 5th Army's forward battalions defeated the German 550th Penal Battalion and two of

the 299th Infantry Division's regiments, took prisoners from these units, and held on to their captured positions.

Simultaneously, the 11th Guards Army's forward battalions, advancing along both sides of the Minsk highway, penetrated to the first trenches of the German 78th Assault Infantry Division in the region 1.5 kilometers northeast of Ostrov-Iur'ev and Kirieva. However, having encountered strong resistance and powerful, deeply developed obstacles, they were unable to advance further. The 31st Army's forward battalions attempted to penetrate to the German trenches northwest of Gormany and south of Zagvazdino, but were forced to withdraw to their initial position because of strong artillery and mortar fire, and fierce counterattacks.

The battle of the forward battalions demonstrated that the German defense was weakest along the Bogushevsk axis. All five of the 5th Army's forward battalions, which were operating on an 18-kilometer front, were successful in this sector. They not only disrupted the enemy's defensive system at the forward edge but also penetrated into the depth and captured bridgeheads in a number of sectors on the Sukhodrovka River's southern bank, thus providing a convenient jumping-off area for the offensive by the army's main forces. Taking advantage of the forward battalions' success, on the night of 23 June, the 5th Army's engineer units constructed three 60-ton bridges across the Sukhodrovka River to cross heavy tanks and artillery, and three bridges for motor vehicle transport.

These battles were also significant in another way. Having taken the forward battalion operations for the commencement of our general offensive, the enemy had already used up part of his immediate reserves on the 22d. He committed into combat in the 5th Army's sector not only his divisional reserves but also units of the 14th Infantry Division, which constituted the VI Army Corps' reserve. As a result, he did not have adequate fresh forces nearby on this axis, with which he could have parried the attack by the 5th Army's main forces on the following day.

Our offensive commenced on 23 June with a powerful artillery preparation along the entire front. The artillery preparation was conducted on the basis of the following schedule: the first five minutes—a fire raid using all artillery; then for the next 105 minutes—a period of destruction of enemy defensive structures using aimed fire and ranging verification; then for 20 minutes—destruction by fire by direct-fire guns; and for the final 40 minutes—suppression of the forward edge and immediate depth. The artillery fire began to shift gradually ('crawl') to the next line, without reducing its tempo, only three minutes before the attack in order to avoid a break between the completion of the fire preparation and the commencement of the attack. At the same time, the infantry was brought forward directly to the explosions of its own shells.

In the light of the forward battalions' successful operations, which had captured the first three enemy trench lines the previous day, the 5th Army's artillery offensive was re-planned on the night of 23 June. Since the number of firing missions against the forward edge of the German defense had fallen off, the first two periods (the artillery preparation and the artillery support of the infantry attack) were relocated. The artillery fire was shifted into the depth of the enemy defense.

Our aircraft (18 IL-2s) bombarded the German 78th Assault Infantry Division headquarters for 15 minutes before the beginning of the attack, despite the low clouds and the rain that had begun to fall. As a result of the attack, fires broke out in the area

where the German headquarters was located. At the same time, 160 Pe-2s bombers conducted bombing raids in the Ostrov-Iur'ev, Lasyr'shchiki, Zavolny, and Lobany region in front of the 11th Guards Army's positions. Five minutes before the infantry attack, our assault [ground-attack] aircraft began to destroy enemy artillery and mortar batteries and his personnel on the battlefield. German fighters flying in groups of four-six aircraft attempted to counter the attacks by our pilots, but were unsuccessful. The 1st Air Army firmly maintained air dominance.

The infantry and tank attack began along the entire front at 0900 hours.

Employing the 5th Guards Rifle Corps, Lieutenant-General Liudnikov's 39th Army delivered the main attack along his left flank. [His forces] penetrated the German defense along a 6-kilometer front from Makarova to Iazykovo, smashed the resistance of the defending German 197th Infantry Division's 347th Regiment, and forced the Luchesa River in the sector south of Perevoz. Exploiting success westward, the 5th Guards Rifle Corps cut the Vitebsk-Orsha railroad in the region of Zamostoch'e Station on the first day of the offensive, and its main forces had reached the Tishkovo and Liadenki line by the end of the day, having advanced 12–13 kilometers into the depth. The corps defeated the German 197th Infantry Division during the battle, forcing its remnants back to Lake Skryblovo. The enemy attempted to halt the swift advance by the 39th Army's left-flank units by using the 95th Infantry Division's 280th Regiment, which had arrived to assist the Vitebsk grouping, but was unsuccessful. This regiment was also thrown back to the west, having suffered heavy losses.

The 39th Army commander ordered the 5th Guards Rifle Corps to employ two forward battalions to cut the Vitebsk-Moshkany road by the morning of 24 June and be prepared for an attack in the general direction of Ostrovno. The army commander decided to exploit the achieved success by introducing his reserve from behind the 5th Guards Rifle Corps' flanks with the mission of using the 164th Rifle Division to attack in the direction of Dobrino, and the 251st Rifle Division to attack in the direction of Zadorozh'e.

Simultaneously, the 84th Rifle Corps commander was ordered to concentrate the 158th Rifle Division in the Arzhalova region, and to attack Vitebsk from the east on the night of 24 June with the mission of capturing the city.

Lieutenant-General Krylov's 5th Army delivered its main attack from its right flank with the forces of the 72d and 65th Rifle Corps. Exploiting the success that the forward battalions had achieved on the previous day, army forces penetrated the German defense in the Kuzmentsy and Osetki sector, defeated opposing units of the enemy's 299th Infantry Division, and reached the Savchenki, Ponizov'e, Bol'shie Kalinovichi, and Boston line by the end of the day, having advanced to a depth of up to ten kilometers and widened the penetration along a front of up to 35 kilometers. Army units on the right flank forced the Luchesa River and cut the Vitebsk-Orsha railroad west of Savchenki. Simultaneously, the army's forward battalions that were operating in the center also forced the Luchesa in several sectors.

Lieutenant-General Galitsky's 11th Guards Army smashed enemy defenses in the Lake Zelenskoe, Ostrov-Iur'ev, and Kirieva sectors, and, having overcome stubborn German resistance, advanced to a depth of two-eight kilometers. The army's right-flank units achieved the greatest success south of Lake Zelenskoe. Here, battalions of the 152d Fortified Region and the 11th Guards Rifle Division, skillfully operating in wooded and

swampy terrain, advanced considerably. At the same time, stubborn enemy resistance and a deeply echeloned defense significantly delayed our offensive on the left flank in the Minsk Highway sector.

Lieutenant-General Glagolev's 31st Army used its right flank [forces] to penetrate to a depth of up to three kilometers, and was fighting enemy infantry and tank counterattacks southwest of Kirieva and northeast of Zagvazdino by the end of the day. The Germans brought up from the reserve up to two infantry regiments with tanks and artillery (from the 260th Infantry and 286th Security Divisions) against the attacking 31st Army units.

Our air operations were complicated by unfavorable meteorological conditions. Nevertheless, our aviation blocked enemy airfields and fought 28 air battles, and, as a result, 15 German aircraft were shot down. A total of 162 Pe-2 bombers carried out a massive bombing raid against the enemy's positions in the 11th Guards Army's offensive sector during the second half of the day.

Over all, *frontal* aviation conducted 1,769 aircraft sorties during this day of combat, while maintaining complete air superiority.

As a result of the first day of the offensive, the greatest success had been achieved on the *front*'s right flank. Here, the 39th and 5th Armies' forces penetrated the German defense to a depth of up to 10–13 kilometers and widened the penetration up to 50 kilometers.

Forces operating in the center and on the left flank encountered more stubborn resistance and deeply developed defensive structures; they penetrated into the enemy defense up to 20 kilometers in separate sectors, but were unable to overcome it completely.

Exploiting the achieved success, the 39th Army's left flank fought its way to the Ostrovno region on 24 June, having cut the path of withdrawal for the Germans from Vitebsk to the southwest. At the same time, units of the 84th Rifle Corps, which were operating on the right flank, approached the eastern outskirts of the city. Attempting to prevent an encirclement, the enemy stubbornly resisted on the approaches to Vitebsk and southwest of the city.

The 5th Army advanced 10–14 kilometers, overcoming the resistance of the remnants of the enemy's 299th and 256th Infantry Divisions and the newly introduced 95th and 14th Infantry Divisions. Its 144th and 215th Rifle Divisions, which had moved forward from the second echelon, penetrated three trench lines by a swift attack following a massive raid by 270 of our bombers and assault aircraft, and seized Bogushevsk by storm at 2100 hours, capturing 24 German guns. Continuing to press the defeated enemy, the army's units were fighting along the Gosmira, Zamoshche, and Chudnia line west and southwest of Bogushevsk and Lake Serokorotnia by the end of the day.

Exploiting the success achieved the previous day by its right flank, the 11th Guards Army captured the regional center of Babinovichi in cooperation with the 5th Army's left-flank units. It then defeated the 260th Infantry Division's 480th Regiment and the 78th Assault Infantry Division's 215th Regiment and an assault battalion in the forests south of this town.

By day's end the 11th Guards Army had widened the penetration up to 30 kilometers and advanced on the right flank to a depth of 14 kilometers, reaching the Lapitskie, Levadnichi, and Orekhi-Vydritsa front. The offensive on the left flank developed less

successfully. Here, army units advanced a total of four-six kilometers, reaching the line north of Shalashino and Osinovka Station (on the Krasnoe-Orsha rail line).

Since the advance by the 11th Guards Army's left-flank units developed slowly, and conditions for the commitment of the mobile formations into the penetration had not been created, the 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps was regrouped north of the Minsk Highway on the night of 25 June.

Continuing to repel fierce enemy counterattacks, the 31st Army did not make a significant advance.

In connection with the success achieved by the 5th Army, the cavalrymechanized group was committed in its offensive sector. The group had already cut the Vitebsk-Orsha rail line in the Luchkovskoe and Bogushevsk sector on the evening of 24 June and had sent its forward detachments to the Moshkany and Chudnia line west of Bogushevsk.

The *front*'s forces continued to develop the offensive successfully on 25 June. The 39th Army's left-flank units reached the Western Dvina's southern bank in the Dorogokupovo and Gnezdilovichi region and linked up with forces from the 1st Baltic Front's 43d Army, thus closing an encirclement ring around the Germans' Vitebsk grouping. Simultaneously, units operating in the army's center captured the eastern sector and center of Vitebsk by a decisive attack. Attempting to break out to the west and southwest, the enemy made up to 18 counterattacks against the 5th Guards Rifle Corps; however, all his attacks were repelled.

Advancing southward swiftly, the cavalry-mechanized group captured Senno and the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps' units defeated two of the 299th Infantry Division's regiments in the forests northeast of Aleksinichi. The cavalry-mechanized group's forward detachments cut the Lepel'–Orsha railroad line in the Uzdorniki region.

Exploiting the cavalry-mechanized group's success the 5th Army advanced 20 kilometers, on 25 June. Destroying small isolated enemy groups, army units liberated more than 100 populated areas, and had reached the Luginovichi, Lake Berezovskoe, and Aleksinichi front by day's end.

At the same time, the 11th Guards Army penetrated two intermediate fortified lines, and reached the Mon'kovo and Mukhanovo line with the forces of the 16th and 8th Guards Rifle Corps' forces. The 36th Guards Rifle Corps was on the Korobishche and Khliustino line behind the left flank.

Having concentrated in the Starye Kholmy region by the morning of 25 June, the 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps was committed into the penetration during the first half of the day in the direction of Kliukovka. Its mission was to cut the Orsha-Lepel' rail line and reach the Repokhovo, Sal'niki, and Zadrov'e (southeast of Sal'niki) region and intercept the Minsk Highway northwest of Orsha.

The 31st Army's right-flank corps penetrated the German defense along the Dnepr River's northern bank and, while employing its main forces to envelop the strongly fortified center of resistance in Dubrovno from the north, reached the road running from Dubrovno to Vysokoe.

In view of the great success achieved on the 5th Army's front (where our forces had reached the operational depths, having penetrated all of the enemy's defensive positions), instructions from Marshal Vasilevsky, the representative of the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command, directed that the 5th Guards Tank Army be deployed along the Bogushevsk axis.

Having been subordinated to the 3d Belorussian Front commander at 2000 hours on 24 June, the 5th Guards Tank Army had concentrated west of Liozno (in the Pogostishche, Krynki, and Dobromysl' region) by the morning of 25 June. At 1400 hours it began moving in the general direction of Bogushevsk, having sent its forward detachments to the Bogushevsk region and further to the north.

Thus, as a result of the first three days of the offensive, the 3d Belorussian Front's forces had completely penetrated the German defense from the Western Dvina to the Dnepr, a stretch of 100 kilometers, and had advanced 30–50 kilometers into the depth. By virtue of its rapid advance along the central axis, the *front*'s forces split the enemy's Vitebsk and Orsha groupings, and encircled five German divisions of the IX, LIII, and VI Army Corps in the Vitebsk region with its right flank, in cooperation with the 1st Baltic Front's 43d Army. During the offensive our forces defeated and inflicted heavy losses on seven German divisions (197th, 95th, 299th, 256th, 260th, and 78th Infantry, and 25th Panzer Grenadier Divisions), destroying more than 16,000 soldiers and officers.

All the while, the 1st Air Army's aircraft continued to maintain air superiority firmly. While supporting the ground forces' operations, it conducted more than 2,500 aircraft assaults and bombing sorties alone during the first three days of the offensive and destroyed 52 German aircraft in air battles. During this period, there were no more than 65 enemy air sorties recorded.

Driven from his main defensive position and suffering defeat along the Vitebsk and Bogushevsk axes, the enemy began to withdraw the Third Panzer and Fourth Armies' rear areas to the Berezina River line.

At the same time, the German command began to introduce operational reserves into battle to support his defeated units and to delay the advance of our forces at intermediate positions. The enemy continued to resist particularly stubbornly on the Orsha axis. Attempting to retain the principal highway—the Minsk Highway—and secure the flank of their force grouping opposing the 2d Belorussian Front, the Germans committed the 260th Infantry Division from the Kopys' region and the 286th Security Division from the Tolochin region along this axis.

Destruction of enemy's Vitebsk grouping

With the arrival of the 39th Army's units in the Ostrovno region and the 1st Baltic Front's 43d Army in the Sharylino and Novki sector on the Western Dvina River's northern bank, the Germans' Vitebsk grouping was threatened with complete encirclement. The German command had already ordered a withdrawal to the west and southwest on 24 June. However, only a portion of the IX and LIII Army Corps' rear areas managed to withdraw.

Units of the 43d Army's 60th Rifle Corps linked up in the Gnezdilovichi region with the left flank of the 5th Guards Rifle Corps' 19th Guards Division on the night of 25 June. The encirclement ring was closed. Simultaneously, the 5th Guards Rifle Corps' 17th and 91st Guards Rifle Divisions attacked, the former against Kamary and Kanyshi, reaching the Western Dvina's southern bank in this sector, and the latter against Dorogokupovo. The enemy grouping was split into two parts as a result of these attacks. The first continued to resist stubbornly in the region encompassing the western outskirts

of Vitebsk, Diakhi, Kamary, and Uzvartsy; the second in the Diagilevo, Ostrovno, and Dorogokupovo region.

The 39th Army's right-flank units forced the Western Dvina River on the night of 26 June, and, together with units of the 43d Army's 92d Rifle Corps, had completely captured Vitebsk by 0600 hours. At the same time, the army's main forces continued to fight against the encircled enemy grouping west and southwest of the town, in cooperation with the 43d Army's units.

The enemy made desperate attempts to break out of the contracting ring and withdraw to the southwest during the course of 26 June. Employing from one to two regiments with tanks and self-propelled guns, and with fire support from ten artillery batteries, the Germans launched up to 22 counterattacks against the 164th Rifle Division and units of the 17th Guards Rifle Division, which occupied the Il'ino, Volchkova, Staiki, and Rudaki line facing north and northeast. As a result of these fierce battles, the part of the grouping that was encircled southwest of Vitebsk broke out to the forests in the Lake Moshchno region, although they suffered heavy losses. General Cherniakhovsky [the *front* commander] ordered the 5th Army's 184th, 63d, and 338th Rifle Divisions to deploy facing north against the Germans who had broken out. Having closed off the routes to the south, [these units] took part in blocking the group that had broken out. Simultaneously, the 39th Army's 251st Rifle Division, which had reached the region of Lake Sarro and Lake Lipno, was wheeled along the front to the northeast and occupied the Zamoshen'e and Zhigaly line west of Lake Moshno *[sic]*.

The 39th Army, together with units of the 43d Army, continued to press the encircled and isolated groupings concentrically during the second half of 26 June and on the night of 27 June. At the same time, our aviation inflicted great losses on enemy personnel and equipment by bombing and ground attacks. The 39th Army commander ordered the army's formations to launch a decisive offensive on the morning of 27 June to liquidate conclusively the encircled enemy. The 84th Rifle Corps was to deliver a concentric attack from the east from the Pavlovichi and Uzvartsy regions in the direction of Bashki. The 5th Guards Rifle Corps received the mission to attack the enemy from the west from the Rudaki region, also in the direction of Bashki. All artillery was ordered to prepare for direct firing and to move directly behind the infantry. Enemy resistance was broken as a result of our coordinated attacks. A large part of those who were encircled and desperately resisting was destroyed. The remainder accepted our command's ultimatum to surrender and was taken prisoner on the morning of 27 June.

One German group numbering 8,000 men from the 4th Luftwaffe Field Division, which was encircled in the Diagilevo, Ostrovno, and Dorogokupovo region and was under the command of Lieutenant-General Pistorius (the commander of this division), managed to steal away in the direction of Beshenkovichi. However, the 1st Baltic Front's 179th Rifle Division intercepted it west of Lake Sarro on 26 June, and it suffered heavy losses. The 33d Antiaircraft Artillery Division and units of the 1st Baltic Front's 60th Rifle Corps, which the enemy suddenly encountered on the march, destroyed the remnants of this group in the Iakubovshchina region on 27 June. Up to 28 June, specially earmarked detachments continued to destroy and take prisoner the remnants of German units hiding in the forests. The enemy left more than 20,000 dead on the battlefield and more than 10,000 German soldiers and officers were taken prisoner. [These included] Infantry General Gollwitzer, the LIII Army Corps commander; Lieutenant-General

Hitter, the 206th Infantry Division commander; Colonel Schmidt, the LIII Corps chief of staff; Colonel Proy, the 197th Infantry Division commander; and a number of other senior officers.

Thus, the Germans' entire Vitebsk grouping, consisting of five divisions (the 197th, 206th, and 246th Infantry, and the 4th and 6th Luftwaffe Field Divisions), was completely liquidated in five days. As a result of the utter defeat of this grouping, our forces captured an important German strategic defensive center in the west and a large Belorussian regional center, which made it possible for us to free up considerable forces and to develop further the successful offensive to the Berezina River.

The 39th Army was withdrawn into the *front*'s second echelon after executing its assigned mission to defeat the enemy's Vitebsk grouping; then, it was transferred to the 1st Baltic Front by a *Stavka* decision dated 1 July 1944.

Defeat of enemy's Orsha grouping and advance toward the Berezina River

At the same time that the encircled enemy grouping was being liquidated in the region southwest of Vitebsk, events were developing successfully in the *front*'s center and left flank.

The cavalry-mechanized group, which had advanced 35–38 kilometers, captured Chereia on 26 June (with the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps).

At the same time, the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps turned south from Aleksinichi and occupied Obol'tsy and Smoliany, thus threatening the Germans' Orsha grouping from the north.

The 5th Army advanced more than 20 kilometers, while destroying isolated enemy detachments which had fallen under the cavalry-mechanized group's attack.

The army's units had reached Lake Zherinskoe and the Orsha-Lepel' rail line by day's end, having destroyed the German VI Army Corps headquarters in the forests north of Adamovo.

While exploiting the cavalry-mechanized group's success, the 5th Guards Tank Army captured Tolochin with an attack by the 3d Guards Tank Corps. Thus, the German Orsha grouping's main lines of communication were cut 50 kilometers west of Orsha. The enemy attempted to throw back our tank units from Tolochin to the north by powerful counterattacks from the south, but was unsuccessful.

Simultaneously, while enveloping Orsha from the north, the 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps smashed German resistance at the intermediate Dovzhenitsy and Moshkovo line and reached the Adrov River, thus severing the Minsk Highway 15 kilometers northwest of Orsha. From here, the corps received the mission of attacking southward against Starosel'e to cut all remaining paths running from Orsha to the west.

The 11th Guards Army advanced 20–25 kilometers on 26 June, with its right flank reaching the Adrov River's western bank and its left flank reaching the immediate northwestern outskirts of Orsha, where the 36th Guards Rifle Corps units engaged in combat for the town.

Having captured Dubrovno, the 31st Army advanced five-25 kilometers and widened the penetration up to 25 kilometers in its offensive sector.

The arrival of our mobile formations at the Minsk Highway west of Orsha, and the further development of their attack to the southwest and south, created a threat not only to the flank but also to the rear area of the Germans' entire Orsha grouping.

The enemy attempted to eliminate this threat by committing units of the 286th Security and 260th Infantry Divisions into battle, but was unsuccessful. The fate of the Orsha center of resistance was decided.

Having penetrated the strongly fortified external defensive belt, the 31st Army broke through to Orsha from the east on 27 June, and, together with the 11th Guards Army's left-flank units, engaged in street battles. Simultaneously, the 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps advanced to Starosel'e, cutting off the Orsha garrison's withdrawal route. The Germans attempted to break through to the west several times, but each time they fell under our tank attacks. Having defeated the Orsha grouping, the 31st and 11th Guards Armies' formations had completely captured the city and the Orsha railroad junction by 0700 hours on 27 June. Exploiting success, the 31st Army's forces attacked across the Dnepr River along the entire length of its offensive sector and, having advanced ten-12 kilometers, reached the Briantsevo and Gorbatsevichi front by day's end.

On the same day, while developing the offensive along the Minsk Highway, the 5th Guards Tank Army captured the large German strong points of Bobr and Krupki and continued to advance on Borisov.

While pursuing the withdrawing enemy, the cavalry-mechanized group reached the region west of Lukoml' and north and south of Kholopenichi during the second half of the day.

The 5th Army once again advanced 20–25 kilometers, while employing a portion of its 72d Rifle Corps in the fight to destroy separate enemy groupings in the forests north of Moshkany, and reached the front north and south of Lake Lukomskoe by day's end.

Encountering weak resistance, the 11th Guards Army covered up to 20 kilometers after capturing Orsha, and reached the Petrashi, Tolochin, and Kokhanovo region.

Thus, as a result of five days of offensive battles, the 3d Belorussian Front's forces, in cooperation with the 1st Baltic Front, utterly destroyed the enemy's Vitebsk grouping and inflicted a defeat on the Orsha grouping, having captured the powerful German centers of resistance of Vitebsk and Orsha. Our forces advanced 115 kilometers into the depth and widened the penetration up to 150 kilometers, liberating more than 1,600 towns and villages. During this combat, in addition to the five enemy divisions encircled and completely destroyed in the Vitebsk region, the 299th, 14th, and 95th Infantry Divisions were defeated; and the 256th and 260th Infantry Divisions, the 286th Security Division, and a number of separate units suffered heavy losses.

The enemy left more than 41,700 soldiers and officers dead on the battlefield. A total of 126 German tanks and self-propelled guns, 796 guns of various calibers, 290 mortars, 2,852 machine-guns, and 1,840 motor vehicles were destroyed. *Front* forces captured 36 tanks, 33 self-propelled guns, 652 guns of various calibers, 514 mortars, 1,774 machine-guns, 132,380 rifles and automatic weapons, 163 radio stations, 3,330 motor vehicles, 25 tractors, 32 boats, 1,540 railroad cars, 2,266 horses, and 255 storage depots with ammunition, weapons, personal equipment, and food. More than 300 officers and 17,776 soldiers were taken prisoner.

In total, during the five days of the operation, the overall German losses in principal types of combat equipment and personnel amounted to 59,476 dead and wounded, 195

tanks and self-propelled guns, 1,448 guns of varied caliber, 804 mortars, 4,626 machine-guns, and 5,170 motor vehicles. During the first five days of the operation, our aviation conducted more than 8,000 aircraft sorties, of which there were around 3,700 ground attacks and bombings alone. More than 70 enemy aircraft were destroyed in air battles and at airfields.

The 3d Belorussian Front continued to develop the offensive toward the Berezina River after the defeat of the Vitebsk and Orsha groupings. Aggressively pursuing the withdrawing enemy, the cavalry-mechanized group assisted the 1st Baltic Front in capturing Lepel' by means of an attack to the north by part of its 3d Guards Mechanized Corps' forces. Its forward detachments reached the Serguch and Berezina Rivers in the Nivki and Brod sectors on 28 June. The main forces of its 3d Guards Cavalry Corps had reached the Berezina in the Zveniaty and Bytcha sector by 1800 hours on 28 June and began to prepare for a forced crossing.

Moving forward behind the cavalry-mechanized group and not encountering serious resistance, the 5th Army's right flank reached Sviadits and its left flank arrived west of Kholopenichi by the end of 28 June, having covered 20–25 kilometers that day.

Advancing in echelon behind the 5th Army, the 11th Guards Army's corps reached Lake Kvetino and the Bobr River by the end of the day, having defeated an enemy detachment numbering up to 1,000 men with mortars and assault guns in the forests west of Solianka and Kalabanovo. The army's forces advanced 25–30 kilometers during this day of the battle.

The 5th Guards Tank Army continued to advance in the general direction of Borisov, but collided with forward units of the 5th Panzer Division, which the German command had just brought up to the Borisov axis, and fought all day south of Kholopenichi (on the Zaprud'e, and Krupki line).

Driving back German covering units, the 31st Army had reached the Drut' River south of Tolochin by the end of the day.

Having received the mission of attacking from Starosel'e along the Krugloe and Ukhvala axis to capture the Berezina River crossing in the Cherniavka region, a portion of the 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps forced the Drut' River and engaged in combat at Krugloe.

As a result, on 28 June the *front*'s forces covered 22–38 kilometers, achieving the greatest success on the right flank. The remnants of the German Third Panzer and Fourth Army units, which had been defeated in previous battles in front of the right flank and center, withdrew swiftly to the Berezina, hoping to hold, reorganize, and regroup at this position. At the same time, the enemy continued to resist stubbornly in front of the leftflank forces, while attempting to prevent our mobile forces from reaching Borisov and covering the withdrawal of their Mogilev-Belynichi grouping, which was operating in front of the 2d Belorussian Front.

The decisive development of the 5th Guards Tank Army's offensive had considerable importance in the existing situation. It was necessary for it to capture the Berezina River crossings as quickly as possible by bold and decisive operations and to attack Borisov—an important German strong point that covered the axis to Minsk. However, as a result of shortcomings in command and control, the army did not exhibit swiftness and decisiveness. While advancing almost on a level with the lead infantry forces, the 5th Guards Tank Army's tank formations fought prolonged battles for strong points in the

Minsk Highway sector. This made it possible for the enemy to bring its tank reserves (the 5th Panzer Division) across to the Berezina River's eastern bank and delay our advance on the Borisov axis.

2D BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S PENETRATION OF ENEMY'S DEFENSE ALONG THE MOGILEV AXIS

Beginning of offensive and penetration of enemy defense

A reconnaissance-in-force of the forward edge of the enemy defense was conducted in the Khalopy and Kamenka sector at 0600 hours on 22 June. The reconnaissance began after a 30-minute artillery preparation and was conducted by four reconnaissance detachments, each consisting of a reinforced company (from the first-echelon division of the 49th Army's shock group). A reconnaissance-in-force was also conducted on the 33d and 50th Armies' fronts. The aim of these operations (in addition to reconnaissance) was to mislead the enemy with respect to our intentions. The 2d Belorussian Front's forces had concluded all preparations for the offensive operation by the end of 22 June.

The 4th Air Army's night bombers bombed regions in the tactical depth where German forces and equipment were assembled on the night of 23 June, and a powerful bombing strike was made against the forward edge of the enemy defense before dawn.

The regimental tank units and self-propelled artillery advanced to their jumping-off positions for the offensive under cover of the noise from the night bombers' motors. The shock group's first-echelon divisions conducted night forays, and, as a result, defined more precisely the Germans' firing system along the forward edge.

It was foggy over the Pronia River and in adjacent regions at dawn. Consequently, it was necessary to change the plan of combat operations somewhat: the beginning of the artillery preparation was shifted from 0700 to 0900 hours. The powerful artillery preparation in the penetration sector continued for two hours (until 1100), and was so effective that the enemy's firing means were almost completely suppressed and partially destroyed. Only individual enemy guns and mortars were able to conduct fire (and even this was disorderly) against our forces that were crossing the Pronia River.

With the first powerful fire raid of our artillery against the forward edge of the German defense, specially trained reinforced companies chosen from each first-echelon rifle regiment swiftly advanced, and had forced the river, overcome minefields and wire obstacles, and penetrated to the first enemy trench by 0930 hours. Encountering no serious resistance here (only German observers remained in the first trench), and keeping close to the explosions of our shells, the companies advanced to the second and, in some cases, to the third enemy trenches.

Under the cover of these companies, the sappers erected 78 assault bridges for the infantry, prepared additional passages in the minefields and wire obstacles, and erected bridges for tanks and artillery across the Pronia River.

The regiments' main forces and, then, the first-echelon divisions' main forces began to cross over to the Pronia River's western bank at 0930 hours on assault bridges, on improvised means, and by wading and swimming. Most of the first-echelon regiments had crossed and occupied the first German trench by the end of the artillery preparation;

some had even reached the second and even third trenches. Individual battalions of the rifle divisions (the 290th and 222d) had penetrated so far forward during the artillery preparation that they reached the fourth enemy trench and had to return to the third trench for fear of being struck by their own artillery fire.

The swift infantry advance required that artillery correct its schedule for the artillery offensive. These changes were not, however, always successfully introduced in a timely fashion, and there were instances when our artillery and mortars fired upon regions already occupied by our sub-units.

During the artillery preparation, at 1000 hours tanks and self-propelled guns began to cross behind the infantry on crossings that had been erected by this time (there were four of them, one in each corps sector, with a load capacity of 60 tons). Two crossings, however (in the 81st and 62d Rifle Corps's sectors), were damaged at the very beginning, and the tank and self-propelled gun crossing slowed down, taking place only on two bridges (in the 69th and 70th Rifle Corps sectors). While overcoming the river, the tanks and self-propelled (SP) guns were introduced into the infantry combat formations and supported their advance. Thus, there were seven tanks and 25 self-propelled guns in the 81st Rifle Corps' sector on the western bank by 1200 hours. However, the tempo of the tank and gun crossing lagged behind that of the infantry advance. While smashing the enemy defense and repelling numerous counterattacks by his tactical reserves in a strength from a company to a battalion with 8–12 tanks and self-propelled guns, the infantry advanced four-six kilometers during the first three hours of the battle. Prisoners indicated that, after three hours of combat, only 15–20 men each remained in many companies that had numbered 80–100 men at the beginning of our offensive.

Three rifle divisions (the 42d, 199th, and 64th) from the corps' second echelon had been introduced into battle by 1600 hours. However, this did not produce tangible results, since the artillery and tanks were delayed and lagged behind, and the artillery fire support for the infantry was weak as a consequence of difficulties encountered in the crossing.

While overcoming strong German resistance, the *front*'s shock group had reached the Perelogi, Ol'khovka, and Perevoz line by the close of 23 June. The Germans' main defensive belt was penetrated on a 12-kilometer front and to a depth of 5–8 kilometers.

At the same time that the shock group was fighting fiercely in the center and penetrating the German defense, the *front*'s right- and left-flank forces (the 33d and 50th Armies) were fighting separate battles, pinning down the enemy's immediate tactical reserves in their operational sectors.

Frontal aviation actively supported the ground operations with bombing and ground attacks against enemy centers of resistance and strong points. Simultaneously, fighter aviation covered our air and ground operations. The 4th Air Army conducted 627 aircraft sorties on 23 June (of which 587 were bombing and the remainder ground attacks and some reconnaissance). German aviation was not active; a total of only 13 sorties was noted on this day of combat.

Exploitation of success

Taking into account mistakes made during the first day's combat operations, the front and 49th Army command took measures during the night to organize infantry support by artillery and tanks and also to ensure precise force command and control. The 49th

Army's left boundary line was adjusted at 2400 hours on 23 June to extend from Dolgovichi, through Kamenka, Chernavtsy, Gatnaia Sloboda, Drachkovo, and Bol'shie Amkhinichi to Kholmy—all inclusive for the 49th Army. At the same time, the 330th Rifle Division with the 144th Gun Artillery Brigade was transferred to the 50th Army.

After 30 minutes of powerful artillery and mortar fire against enemy centers of resistance, the *front* shock group (the 49th Army), assisted by the left-flank battalions of the 33d Army's 154th Fortified Region and the rightflank divisions of the 50th Army's 121st Rifle Corps (the 139th and 330th Rifle Divisions), renewed the offensive on the morning of 24 June.

Repelling German counterattacks and breaking the resistance of the strong points, the 49th Army advanced stubbornly to the west, while firmly protecting its flanks.

Having been driven from his intermediate positions, after several attempts to halt our units' advance by counterattacks, at 1300 hours the enemy began to withdraw to the Basia River's western bank where he had a prepared defensive position. Simultaneously, in groups of 10–15 aircraft, German aviation attempted to bomb our advancing combat formations to halt their advance. However, our fighter aircraft and our covering antiaircraft artillery repelled these enemy attempts.

From the very beginning of our advance, divisional forward detachments, which had been mounted on motor vehicle transport, began to advance rapidly to the Basia River with the mission of capturing crossings and bridgeheads on the western bank to ensure the swifter advance of the shock group's main forces.

Thus, the 42d Rifle Division's forward detachment (consisting of the 455th Rifle Regiment's 3d Battalion with the 4th Antitank Battalion, a battalion from the 472d Artillery Regiment, and a sapper company) destroyed small withdrawing German groups in its path, enveloped individual strong points, and had penetrated to Chernevka and begun to force the Basia River from the march by 1700 hours.

As a result of the successful offensive, the *front*'s shock group (the 49th Army), with artillery and air support, significantly increased the depth of the penetration of the German defense on 24 June, having wedged 20 kilometers into it, and reached the Basia River in the Chernevka and Chernavtsy sector by the end of the day. The Germans' main defensive belt was penetrated, and the German forces located on the 33d Army's front and the 50th Army's right flank were threatened with envelopment.

While approaching the Basia River, the 49th Army's forces encountered organized enemy fire from the western bank, where the Germans had been able to organize serious resistance in prepared positions by units withdrawing from the Pronia River and by subunits brought up from the west. The *front*'s forces needed time to bring up reinforcing forces and weaponry so that a powerful attack could break the German resistance at this position. Reinforcing forces and weapons were brought up during the night of 25 June.

The *front*'s right flank (the 33d Army's units) and left flank (the 50th Army's forces) continued to defend their occupied positions, conducted reconnaissance, and simultaneously prepared to launch an attack along the entire front.

While strengthening the force of its air attacks, *frontal* aviation continued to attack enemy forces, particularly withdrawing columns and enemy assembling areas for personnel and equipment, with massed raids. Night bombers struck enemy reserves and storage depots in the Shklov and Mogilev regions and at the Dnepr River crossings. The 4th Air Army conducted 873 aircraft sorties on 24 June.

German air activity also revived somewhat on this day, with groups of 10–20 aircraft bombing our forces several times. Overall, 60 enemy air sorties were registered on this day of battle.

Penetration of German defensive line at the Basia River

Forces brought up artillery and ammunition to the combat formations of attacking units, arranged crossing means, and prepared available materials to force the Basia River on the night of 25 June. It was also necessary to bring up tanks and self-propelled artillery, which had lagged somewhat behind.

While delaying our advancing units, the enemy brought his rear services and equipment back beyond the Dnepr during the night. Simultaneously, he brought a fresh grenadier regiment from the 'Feldhernhalle' Division (formerly the 60th Panzer Grenadier Division) forward from Mogilev to the Chernevka and Zhdanovichi region to parry the 49th Army's attacks.

The *front*'s shock group, having resumed its offensive on the morning of 25 June, stubbornly overcame German resistance. Making use of captured bridgeheads on the Basia River's western bank and with artillery and air support, the troops began forcing the river at 0600 hours and developing the offensive along the entire front. The 49th Army's four corps (with seven divisions in the first echelon—the 42d, 32d, 95th, 199th, 290th, 64th, and 369th) and the mobile group (transferred to the army from the *front*) had forced the river by 1000 hours. Part of the forces overcame the German defense along the western bank and reached the Resta River, where the enemy offered organized resistance at prepared positions along the western bank.

The Germans launched counterattacks in several front sectors, having brought fresh units from the 'Feldhernhalle' Division and special sub-units forward to the front. With strong support by artillery and mortar fire and tanks, [they] resisted our forces fiercely.

Suppressing the enemy resistance by powerful artillery and air attacks, the forces of the *front*'s shock group stubbornly advanced and had reached the Resta River on the Novo-Aleksandrovka and Drachkovo front by the end of the day, having captured bridgeheads in separate sectors on its western bank. To the south, the 50th Army, whose right-flank forces of five divisions (the 238th, 139th, 330th, 385th, and 110th) had launched an attack that morning, overcame the German defense, forced the Pronia River, and captured Chausy, the regional center of the Mogilev *oblast*'. The army had reached the line from (excluding) Drachkovo through Lobki and Novoselki to Usushek by day's end, widening the penetration along the front.

Thus, having forced the Pronia River and supported by a powerful artillery and air attack, the 2d Belorussian Front penetrated the strongly fortified German defense in a 45-km sector covering the Mogilev axis. It advanced up to 30 kilometers during the three days of offensive combat, broadening the penetration up to 75 kilometers along the front. The 33d Army's right flank and center continued to defend its previous positions and to conduct reconnaissance using the 344th and 70th Rifle Divisions. On the left flank, the 154th Fortified Region's battalions and the 222d Rifle Division, the latter having joined the 33d Army at 1100 hours on 25 June, fought offensive battles at the Staryi Pribuzh and Belaia line, while protecting the 49th Army's right flank. The army did not, however, have great success.

Frontal aviation continued to suppress the German defense in the offensive sector on 25 June by bombing and ground attacks. During the day, it conducted 900 aircraft sorties. Enemy aviation was not active; only eight sorties were noted in the front sector.

Exploitation of success along entire front. Arrival at the Dnepr River

On the night of 26 June, Colonel-General Zakharov, the *front* commander, ordered the 33d Army to resume the offensive along the army's entire front quickly and to employ its main forces to capture the Kliny, Chaplinka, and Radishchino line by the end of 26 June.

Lieutenant-General Grishin, the 49th Army commander, was ordered to regroup two rifle corps to the right flank in the (excluding) Novo-Aleksandrovka and Bubikovo sector on the night of 26 June, and to employ these corps to attack westward on 26 June. They were to reach the Dnepr River's eastern bank north of Mogilev by day's end.

Lieutenant-General Boldin, the 50th Army commander, was ordered to use his 121st and 38th Rifle Corps to continue the offensive on the morning of 26 June, while employing his main force on his right flank. [His forces] were to reach the Lupolovo and Slediuki line by day's end, and the corps' mobile detachments were to reach the Dnepr River line.

The Military Council pointed out the *front* mobile group's passivity to its commander and ordered the units to be withdrawn from battle. They were to relocate to the Novo-Aleksandrovka region and further to the north on the night of 26 June, and to force the Dnepr no later than 1800 hours on 26 June.

The 2d Belorussian Front's shock group penetrated the German defensive position along the Resta River on the morning of 26 June and, advancing successfully, began the pursuit of the withdrawing enemy—the 33d Army on the Shklov axis, and the 49th and 50th Armies on the Mogilev axis. While repelling enemy infantry counterattacks in individual sectors and supported by tank and self-propelled gun groups, part of the *front*'s shock group reached the Dnepr, having covered 50 kilometers in four days, and widened the penetration up to a 90-kilometer front.

In heavy combat, the 33d Army captured the town of Gorki (a Mogilev *oblast*' regional center) and reached the Sidorovka and Litvinovichi line by the end of the day, having covered more than 30 kilometers in the fighting. A portion of the 49th Army's forces fought their way across the Dnepr River, and the main forces had reached the Dnepr within its boundary lines by day's end. The 50th Army's right flank and center (the 121st Rifle Corps, consisting of the 238th, 139th, and 330th Rifle Divisions; and the 38th Rifle Corps, consisting of the 385th, 380th, and 110th Rifle Divisions) had reached the Podbel'e and Komarin line by 2200 hours. It [the 50th Army] continued to employ the 19th Corps' forces (the 324th and 362d Rifle Divisions) to defend its existing positions along the Komarin, Staraia Trasna, and Selets-Kholopeev line.

The *front*'s reserves concentrated in the following regions by the end of the day: the 49th Rifle Division northwest of Zhdanovichi, the 154th Fortified Region in Riabka and to the east, and the 307th Rifle Division in Drachkovo and to the north.

Front air forces continued their bombing and ground attacks against withdrawing German forces on 26 June. They conducted 1,049 aircraft sorties during the day. Enemy aviation was limited to reconnaissance flights; in all, 13 aircraft sorties were noted during the day.

Forcing of the Dnepr River and penetration of German defensive line on western bank

While pursuing the enemy, the 2d Belorussian Front's forces cleared the Germans out of the entire eastern bank in the Kopys', Mogilev, and Bykhov sector, forced the Dnepr north and south of Mogilev, cut the Orsha-Mogilev rail line, and fought street battles in Mogilev on 27 June.

While beating back German covering units, the 33d Army advanced 35–40 kilometers, and three of its divisions (the 344th, 70th, and 222d) reached the Man'kovo and Liakhovka line. The army's units captured the large town of Kopys' and completed the liquidation of the enemy in Shklov during these battles.

Having forced the Dnepr with its main forces on the night of 27 June and having defeated German covering units, five of the 49th Army's divisions continued a decisive offensive to the west. Meanwhile, two divisions (the 290th and 369th), cooperating with units of the 50th Army's 121st Rifle Corps, fought street battles for Mogilev, having enveloped it from the northwest by means of a mobile group consisting of the 23d Guards Tank Brigade and the 13th Antitank Artillery Brigade's 1434th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment. The army had advanced up to 20 kilometers and reached the Liakhovka, Brakovo, and Tishovka line by the end of the day, and continued fierce street battles for Mogilev during the night.

While continuing to pursue the enemy, units of two of the divisions (the 238th and one regiment of the 139th) of the 50th Army's 121st Rifle Corps were fighting street battles for Mogilev by day's end on 27 June, in cooperation with the 49th Army's left-flank units, and five divisions had reached the Dnepr's eastern bank and were ready to force it. The forward detachments of two rifle divisions (the 380th and 362d) had already captured bridgeheads on the western bank.

The *front* reserves had concentrated in the following regions on 27 June: the 157th Rifle Division in Liubizh and to the southeast; the 154th Fortified Region in Riabka and to the east; the 49th Rifle Division northwest of Zhdanovichi; and the 307th Rifle Division had completed its concentration in Drachkovo and to the north by 2100 hours.

The *front*'s air forces continued to support ground forces actively, by suppressing and destroying enemy personnel and equipment in the Kopys', Shklov, Mogilev, and Bykhov regions and along the roads west of these areas.

Having forced the Dnepr in a 120-kilometer sector, on 28 June the 2d Belorussian Front's forces penetrated the German defensive belt prepared on the river's western bank; stormed and captured Mogilev, a large Belorussian *oblast*' center and an operationally important center of German defense on the Minsk axis; and fought battles to occupy Shklov and Bykhov. The forward detachments of the *front*'s formation had reached the Drut' River in the Ugol'shchina, Gorodishche, Novaia Slobodka, and Chigirinka sector by day's end, where they encountered organized enemy resistance from a prepared defensive position along the river's western bank.

The 33d Army's 344th, 70th, and 222d Rifle Divisions had reached the Starosel', Solodovka, and Kliapinichi line by the end of 28 June. The 157th Division (the army's reserve) had crossed to the Zelenyi region (15 kilometers west of Shklov) by 2200 hours. The 62d Rifle Corps' headquarters, which had been transferred from the 49th to the 33d Army, joined the operations of the 344th and 70th Rifle Divisions. The army's headquarters was located in the Gorodets region (eight kilometers east of Shklov).

Pursuing the enemy with its 69th Rifle Corps, the 49th Army had reached the Prudki and Pobeda line by 2000 hours. After stubborn battles against enemy rear guards in the Kniazhitsy region, the 81st Rifle Corps (consisting of the 32d and 95th Rifle Divisions) had reached the Pobeda and Kamenitsa line by 2100 hours. The 70th Rifle Corps, consisting of three divisions, completed the liquidation of the enemy in Mogilev and, leaving two divisions there, used the 199th Rifle Division to reach the Peschanka and (excluding) Dobrosnevichi line by 2100 hours. The 64th Rifle Division was in the army reserve and was on the march from Mogilev to Peschanka by day's end. On 28 June the *front* commander ordered the 62d Rifle Corps' headquarters and the 1197th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment to be transferred from the 49th Army to the 33d Army and the 43d Guards Tank Brigade and the 722d Self-propelled Artillery Regiment to be transferred to the 50th Army. [New] boundary lines were established between the 33d and 49th Armies at 0600 on 28 June, extending as before up to Tudorovo and further through Kliapinichi, Lubiany, Ushkovo, Kleva, Til'kovka, and Zhurovka to Zhornovka (all inclusive for the 33d Army). [The new boundary lines] between the 49th and 50th Armies extended as before up to Kholmy and further through Mogilev, Dobrosnevichi, Otnianka, Aksen'kovichi, and Mostishche to Miroslavka (all except for Miroslavka were inclusive for the 49th Army).

Our forces defeated the German 12th Infantry Division, and the SS 'Feldhernhalle' Panzer Grenadier Division during the battle for Mogilev, and other German units also suffered heavy losses. More than 2,000 prisoners were taken. A large amount of captured equipment—arms, dozens of storage depots, and other goods—was captured.

Front forces pursuing the withdrawing enemy west of Mogilev advanced up to 25 kilometers on 29 June and occupied more than 500 towns and villages, including the Mogilev *oblast*' regional center of Belynichi. They forced the Drut' River in a number of sectors south of Belynichi.

As a result of the offensive battles conducted from 23–29 June, the 2d Belorussian Front inflicted the following losses on the enemy in personnel and equipment: 60 tanks, 250 guns of various calibers, 200 mortars, 500 machine-guns, and 3,150 motor vehicles destroyed. The enemy left up to 30,000 of his officers and soldiers on the battlefield.

During this time the 2d Belorussian Front's forces captured the following trophies: 20 tanks, 161 guns of various calibers, 192 mortars, 500 machine-guns, 9,100 rifles and automatic weapons, 3,000 motor vehicles, three steamboats, 120 railroad cars, and 2,100 horses.

Those taken prisoner numbered 3,250, including more than 100 officers and two German generals: Lieutenant-General Bamler (the 12th Infantry Division commander) and Major-General Erdmannsdorff (the commandant of Mogilev).

Thus, as a result of the seven days-offensive fight of the 2d Belorussian Front, which completed the defeat of the enemy along the Mogilev axis and liberated Mogilev, the overall German losses in personnel and major types of combat equipment were 33,250 men captured and killed, 80 tanks, 411 guns of varied caliber, 392 mortars, 1,060 machine-guns, and 6,150 motor vehicles.

1ST BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S PENETRATION OF THE ENEMY DEFENSE AND LIQUIDATION OF THEIR BOBRUISK GROUPING

Following a powerful artillery preparation, the infantry and tanks of the 3d and 48th Armies launched their offensive at 0600 hours on 24 June. The 65th and 28th Armies began their offensive one hour later.

Because of poor meteorological conditions, at first aviation was unable to participate in the general offensive. Aircraft that were ready for take-off were forced to remain at their airfields.

Attacking along the Ozerane and Kostiashovo front, the 3d Army's shock group met stubborn enemy resistance. While repelling fierce enemy infantry and tank counterattacks, units from the 35th and 41st Rifle Corps captured the first trench line at the Ozerane and Verichev line at 0800 hours, and were forced to consolidate.

The offensive in the 48th Army's sector also developed with great difficulty. The Drut' River's extensive marshy flood lands considerably slowed down the crossing of the infantry and, especially, the reinforcing weaponry and equipment (mainly tanks).

The 42d and 29th Rifle Corps' units were able to force the enemy out of the first trench and capture it, but only after two hours of intense battles. The 48th Army captured the second trench at 1130 hours, but was unable to advance further. It consolidated its positions with the 42d Rifle Corps [deployed] from Kostiashovo to Zapol'e and the 29th Rifle Corps from the eastern outskirts of Sviatoe Ozero to Zadrut'e.

The offensive developed most successfully in the 65th Army's sector. A powerful attack by the 18th Rifle Corps at 0700 hours penetrated the enemy defense on the front from Mikhailovka through Korma. Overcoming resistance, the army began to develop the offensive swiftly to the northwest.

Improved meteorological conditions during the second half of the day made it possible to employ aviation (which conducted 2,465 aircraft sorties on this day), which subjected enemy combat formations to a powerful bombardment. The corps' units had already penetrated all five enemy trench lines during the first half of the day, and, while continuing the offensive toward Gomza, they had advanced five-six kilometers into the enemy's dispositions by 1300 hours, having captured the powerful strong points at Rakovichi and Petrovichi.

General Batov, the 65th Army commander, committed the 1st Guards Don Tank Corps into battle in the army center at 1800 hours. Having reached the rear area of the enemy's Parichi grouping, [the corps] began to develop the offensive rapidly in two directions, the 16th Guards Tank Brigade toward Knyshevichi and Mekhovo and the 17th Guards Tank Brigade toward Romanishche. The tanks had captured the towns of Gomza and Sekirichi by day's end. Taking advantage of the tanks' success, the infantry accelerated its advance considerably, and had reached the Grabchi, Gomza, and Sekirichi line by the end of the day.

Having penetrated the German defense in the Cherniavka and Rog sector, the 28th Army, under the command of General Luchinsky, encountered stubborn enemy resistance, and, while driving back units of the 35th Infantry Division, had reached the

following line by day's end: the 3d Guards and 20th Rifle Corps from Brodtsy to height marker 141 and the 128th Rifle Corps from Ostino to Rog.

Enemy aviation rendered only weak resistance. A total of only 143 aircraft sorties (mainly bombers) were noted on this day of combat.

Thus, employing the contiguous flanks (of the 65th and 28th Armies), the 1st Belorussian Front penetrated the enemy defense along a front of up to 30 kilometers and to a depth of 5–10 kilometers on the first day of the offensive. German forces north of Rogachev offered stubborn resistance and continued to hold on to their third and fourth trenches. Once committed into battle, the 1st Guards Don Tank Corps quickly widened the penetration toward the flanks and deepened it up to 20 kilometers, its forward detachments having reached the Knyshevichi and Romanishche line.

Thus, the necessary conditions had been created in these armies' sectors for the commitment of the mobile group into the penetration and for the exploitation of success in the general direction of Bobruisk.

Commitment of mobile group into the penetration (25 June 1944)

On the order of the *front* commander, at 0700 hours the cavalry-mechanized group under the command of Lieutenant-General Pliev, consisting of the 4th Guards Cavalry Corps (the 9th, 30th, and 10th Cavalry Divisions) and the 1st Mechanized Corps (the 35th, 37th and 19th Mechanized Brigades, and the 219th Tank Brigade), left the Kobyl'shchina region to be committed into the penetration. This group's mission was to conduct a passage of lines at 1800 hours through the combat formations of the 65th and 28th Armies' units along the Sekirichi, Moiseevka, and Goduny front. Then, while aggressively developing the offensive to the northwest, [it was] to envelop the enemy's Bobruisk grouping from the west and sever all of its lines of communication on this axis.

The cavalry-mechanized group passed through the 28th Army's units at the indicated position at 1630 hours, and began to advance rapidly. The enemy did not resist, and continued to withdraw to the northwest in small groups, blowing up bridges and corduroy roads, and mining roads. Pursuing the withdrawing enemy, the group energetically advanced in the direction of Glusk, and had captured the towns of Ustrekhi, Berezovka, and Kholopenichi by 1500 hours on 26 June. The lead elements of both of the 1st Mechanized Corps' columns passed the Zelenkovichi and Zubarevichi line at 1600 hours.

As a result of [these] decisive operations, the cavalry-mechanized group penetrated more than 30 kilometers into the enemy disposition on the first day of the offensive, and 40 kilometers on the second, having cut all routes leading to Bobruisk from the south and southwest on 26 June.

The cavalry-mechanized group's rapid advance facilitated the offensive by the 65th Army's units. In cooperating with the 1st Guards Don Tank Corps, the 105th and 18th Rifle Corps destroyed the enemy defending in the Parichi region with a decisive attack from several directions, and the main forces reached the following positions by day's end on 26 June: the 105th Corps from Novaia Belitsa to Borovaia, and the 18th Corps from Petrovichi through Kozlovichi to Ustrekhi. Encountering increasing enemy resistance on the approaches to the town, the 1st Guards Don Tank Corps' tanks were fighting on the Boronovichi, and Emel'ianov bridge line by the end of the day. Several of the corps' units enveloped the town from the west and cut the Bobruisk-Slutsk Highway at

Kamenka. Continuing the offensive even at night, the tank corps had captured Miradina Station (eight kilometers northwest of Bobruisk) by midday on 27 June, while its main forces reached the Berezina River north of Bobruisk.

Ever widening the penetration, the 28th Army's main forces fought their way across the Ptich' River, captured Glusk, and, while overcoming stubborn enemy resistance, began to develop the offensive to the west.

In panic, the uncoordinated units of the XXXXI Panzer Corps' defeated 36th and 35th Infantry Divisions fled to the north toward Bobruisk. Separate enemy groups attempted to recross the Berezina River to its eastern bank and link up with those forces already holding a small bridgehead southeast of Bobruisk. However, they fell under an attack by the Dnepr Flotilla's 1st Brigade of River Boats, which was advancing northward along the Berezina River, and were destroyed piecemeal.

As before, enemy aviation was not particularly active. A total of 96 aircraft sorties were noted on 26 June.

Thus, in cooperation with the mobile cavalry-mechanized group and actively supported by the 16th Air Army, the 65th Army's forces penetrated the Germans' deeply echeloned defense in four days of combat. Then, by exploiting success to the north, [it] enveloped the Germans' Bobruisk grouping from the rear and cut off its withdrawal routes to the west.

Penetration of German defense north of Rogachev and encirclement of enemy's Bobruisk grouping

Combat continued with unabated force in the 3d and 48th Armies' offensive sectors on the night of 25 June. While launching counterattacks, the enemy used all of his forces in an attempt to beat back our units that had penetrated into the defense and to throw them back to the river. This, however, he failed to achieve.

After a 45-minute artillery preparation, the 3d Army's 35th and 41st Corps renewed their attacks at 1000 hours on 25 June. In an attempt to accelerate the penetration of the enemy defense, General Gorbatov, the 3d Army commander, committed two of the 9th Tank Corps' tank brigades (the 95th and 108th) into battle at 1200 hours. They began their offensive cooperating closely with the infantry, the former toward Osovnik and the latter toward Malaia Krushinovka (four kilometers north of Falevichi).

The offensive accelerated considerably, and the 35th Rifle Corps' units forced the enemy back to the west. Its right flank had reached the Dobritsa River east of Osovnik by 1900 hours, while the center and left flank had captured the powerful enemy strong points in Malaia Krushinovka and Falevichi. The 41st Rifle Corps had reached the Dobritsa River (in the Hill 152 and Tikhinichi sector) by day's end, but was unable to force the river and, thus, consolidated here.

The 48th Army's 42d and 29th Rifle Corps were also unable to achieve significant results on this day. The army's units reached the Semenkovichi, Stren'ki, and Zabolot'e line and dug in there after fierce battles that endured all day.

Thus, at a time when the 65th Army's units were swiftly developing their offensive to the northwest in cooperation with the cavalry-mechanized group and were reaching the railroad at Chernye Brody with their left flank, and when the 1st Guards Don Tank Corps' tanks had already penetrated to Orsichi, the 3d and 48th Armies had as yet been

unable to penetrate the enemy's deeply echeloned defense. Instead, they continued to fight heavy battles in the sector between the Drut' and Dobritsa Rivers.

The *front* commander demanded that the 3d and 48th Army commanders accelerate their offensive and complete the full encirclement of the enemy's Bobruisk grouping on 27 June by employing all of their available reserves.

Fulfilling the *front* commander's order, the 3d Army commander decided to commit the entire 9th Tank Corps into battle from the Dobritsa River line on 26 June. He assigned [to the corps] the mission to penetrate into the enemy's deep rear area and capture the Startsy region.

Air reconnaissance reported at 0500 hours on 26 June that large-scale movements of enemy artillery columns, motor vehicles, and animal-drawn transport were occurring along all roads from the Dobysna River westward toward Bobruisk. A considerable portion of this transport turned to the northwest at Bobruisk and moved along the Berezina River's eastern bank. Air-reconnaissance data indicated that evidently the enemy had begun to withdraw his forces from the Drut' River line beyond the Berezina River on the night of 26 June. Consequently, since he did not expect the 35th Rifle Corps' entire force to reach the Dobritsa River's western bank, the 3d Army commander ordered the 9th Tank Corps to launch an attack in the general direction of Barchitsa, Startsy, and Bobruisk and to capture Startsy by day's end on 26 June, thus severing the Mogilev, Bobruisk Highway.

After our powerful air and artillery attack, the corps penetrated the enemy defense on the Dobritsa River's western bank at 0900 hours. The 95th Tank Brigade began to advance along the high road toward Startsy, and the 108th Tank Brigade turned southwest from the Osovnik region and began to advance through Dobysno to Startsy.

Destroying the enemy infantry and firing means in their path and swiftly advancing westward, the tanks soon overtook the enemy's dense artillery, troop train, and motor vehicle columns. Firing from the march, the tanks quickly broke into these columns. German soldiers, fired upon by tankers with machine-guns, began to scatter off the road in panic, and a considerable number were immediately taken prisoner. Numerous fires flared up ahead along the road. Having detected our penetrating tanks, the Germans began to burn their own vehicles, blow up their artillery, and shoot their horses. Burning enemy tanks, abandoned motor vehicles, heaps of damaged transport, and the enormous quantity of dead animals frequently forced the corps to halt. Our tanks' movement along the road became increasingly difficult.

Our tanks captured the large town of Barchitsa at 1100 hours on 26 June and, after re-establishing the Dobysna River crossing (which had been blown up), decisively pursued the enemy.

The 95th Tank Brigade penetrated to Startsy from the march at 1700 hours. After bringing its main forces forward, the tank corps left behind covering forces against attack from the north and moved southwest from the Startsy region. The 9th Tank Corps captured the town of Titovka at 1900 hours, and occupied an all-round defense along the line of the southern outskirts of Dumanovshchina and Zelenka by the morning of 27 June, having cut the entire highway and crossing at the eastern outskirts of Bobruisk.

Exploiting the tank corps' success, the 35th Rifle Corps' units speeded up their westward advance by forced march and, having designated forward detachments, severed

the Mogilev-Bobruisk Highway in the Borovitsa (four kilometers east of Vila) and Startsy sector by the end of 26 June.

By this time the 41st Rifle Corps was pursuing the withdrawing enemy, with part of its forces forcing the Ola River and fighting on the Volosovichi and Ozery line.

The 3d Army destroyed up to 8,000 enemy soldiers and officers, 150 guns of various calibers, 120 mortars, 450 machine-guns, and many tanks and self-propelled guns during the three days of combat operations; much trophy equipment was also captured.

The 48th Army captured Zhlobin on 26 June and, while destroying the enemy rear guard, fought along the Ozery, Krivka, Pristan', and Shchedry line.

Thus, while pursuing the defeated units of the German Ninth Army, the 1st Belorussian Front's forces carried out the encirclement of the German XXXV and XXXXI Panzer Corps' units in the Bobruisk region on the morning of 27 June by means of aggressive attacks by the 3d Army from the northeast and the 65th Army from the southwest.

The German command made its first attempts to withdraw its forces from encirclement to the north and northwest on 27 June. This required the destruction of the encircled German forces east of Bobruisk as soon as possible and the continuation of the subsequent offensive toward Minsk and Slutsk.

Liquidation of enemy's encircled Bobruisk grouping (27–28 June 1944)

The encirclement ring extended 25–30 kilometers from east to west and 20–25 kilometers from north to south. Units of the enemy's XXXV Army Corps and XXXXI Panzer Corps, consisting of the 296th, 6th, 383d, 45th, and 36th Infantry Divisions, and a large number of specialized combat arms units and reinforcements, were completely encircled in the region (totaling up to 40,000 men). The densest groupings of our forces were from the east, south, and west. The encircled grouping was blocked from the north and northwest by forces of the 9th and 1st Guards Don Tank Corps this very day.

Army General Rokossovsky, the *front* commander, assigned Lieutenant-General Romanenko's 48th Army the mission of destroying the encircled enemy grouping and chose the 65th Army's 105th Rifle Corps to assist. Meanwhile, the *front*'s main forces were to continue the offensive to the west and northwest to capture Minsk and Slutsk within the next few days. To do so, he ordered the 3d Army commander to continue an aggressive offensive with his left-flank formations in the general direction of Liubonichi, Orlino, and Svisloch'. The 9th Tank Corps was to cross the Berezina River north of Bobruisk with the mission of capturing Osipovichi.

Rokossovsky ordered the 65th Army commander to capture the city of Bobruisk with part of his forces and to continue the offensive with the army's main force with the mission of capturing Osipovichi, Daraganovo, and Starye Dorogi. Subsequently, he was to develop the success to Slutsk. Not anticipating the full destruction of the garrison encircled in Bobruisk, he directed the 1st Guards Don Tank Corps to the northwest to seize Osipovichi.

The 28th Army was to pursue the enemy aggressively in the general direction of Glusk, Liuban', and Pogost.

While attempting to take advantage of the inadequate density of our encirclement ring in the sector north of Bobruisk, on 27 June the German Ninth Army commander sent the

XXXV Army Corps commander the following order: ‘Bring your forces out of encirclement no matter what. Withdraw either to Bobruisk or to the north—to Pogoreloe—to link up with the Fourth Army. Act independently.’

The XXXV Army Corps commander, Lieutenant-General Baron von Luttzow, decided to break through to the north to the Fourth Army. He ordered his army ‘to swiftly destroy all equipment, leaving only what is necessary for battle.’ The breakout from the encirclement was designated for the night of 28 June.

However, Lieutenant-General Luttzow’s decision was made too late. By this time our forces had firmly closed all enemy routes out of the encirclement to the north, and, on the right flank, our forces had reached the Berezina River in the Svisloch’ region by the morning of 28 June.

Powerful explosions and automatic weapons firing were heard in the dispositions of the encircled enemy and large fires appeared at midday on 27 June. German soldiers were blowing up their guns, tractors, and tanks, setting fire to vehicles, and destroying all their cattle. Enemy covering units, consisting mainly of individual soldiers and officers, continued to resist stubbornly, and several times resorted to counterattacks. However, the units of the 3d and 48th Armies, in close cooperation with the 65th Army’s 105th Rifle Division and supported intensively by air and artillery, destroyed the enemy and closed the encirclement ring even tighter.

Our aviation detected a large gathering of German infantry, up to 150 tanks, more than 1,000 guns of various calibers, up to 6,000 motor vehicles, 400 tractors, and a large number of transports in the Dubovka region at 1600 hours. Enemy detachments in up to infantry regimental strength with 10–15 tanks launched counterattacks as many as 15 times against the 9th Tank Corps’ units in the Titovka region during the second half of 27 June in an attempt to break out to the north.

All this attested to the fact that the enemy was preparing to withdraw its forces out of encirclement to the north on the night of 28 June, since withdrawal to Bobruisk was almost impossible because of the absence of crossings of the Berezina.

However, it was difficult to reinforce the 9th Tank Corps’ defensive region with infantry forces (to thwart the German attempt to break through to the north) in the short period of time remaining. The *front* commander decided to use the 16th Air Army’s large air formations to destroy the encircled German forces and completely defeat them from the air by powerful attacks.

A total of 526 aircraft were launched into the skies at 1900 hours on 27 June (after the 3d and 48th Armies had precisely indicated their forward edge). Encountering no resistance from enemy aviation, the aircraft reached the region where the German grouping was encircled within 15 minutes.

The enemy’s combat formations were under heavy air attack and under continuous exploding bombs for an hour. Fires broke out, ammunition depots exploded, and motor vehicles were burning throughout all of the columns in the Germans’ dispositions. Throwing away their equipment and arms, the German soldiers fled from the forests and dashed around the fields in panic. Many of them swam across the Berezina in an attempt to save themselves in Bobruisk, but, falling under flanking fire from the 105th Rifle Corps’ units, they were also destroyed. Soon the region subjected to the bombardment was a wide expanse of chaotically heaped-up and damaged equipment, covered with thousands of bodies of German soldiers and officers. Separate enemy groups, which had

remained intact despite the air fire, lost control and wandered the forests. Many of them soon raised the white flag and were taken prisoner.

After the last bombers left the battlefield, the 48th Army's infantry and tanks, supported by powerful artillery fire, shifted to the offensive along the entire front at 2015 hours. The enemy (mainly SS units, which were in direct contact with our units in many front sectors, and had suffered less from the air bombardment) once again offered stubborn resistance.

In cooperation with the 29th and 53d Rifle Corps attacking from the southeast in the general direction of Dubovka, the 42d Rifle Corps' units dismembered the enemy forces with a powerful attack in the direction of Babino (five kilometers east of Titovka), destroyed them, and began to advance energetically toward the Berezina River by 2200 hours. Having lost hope of linking up with their forces, German soldiers with officers at their head began to be taken prisoner in groups of 100–300 and more. Soon, Lieutenant-General Luttzow, the commander of the XXXV Army Corps, was among the prisoners. Having escaped defeat and imprisonment, an insignificant portion of the German forces fled to the west without offering resistance and took shelter in Bobruisk.

The 3d and 48th Armies' units, assisted by the 16th Air Army, concluded the liquidation of the German forces encircled southeast of Bobruisk at 1300 hours on 28 June, and the armies' main forces reached the Berezina River.

As a result of these two days of intense battles while energetically pursuing the withdrawing enemy, our forces deprived him of an opportunity to consolidate at any position firmly and to organize a defense in the Bobruisk region. The powerful and timely air attack, followed quickly by ground attacks, completely disorganized the enemy's defense, dismembering it into small, isolated centers, and ensured the complete defeat of the enemy in an extremely short period.

Our forces destroyed more than 10,000 German soldiers and officers in the two days of battle (27 and 28 June) east of Bobruisk. As many as 6,000 men were taken prisoner, and around 4,000 motor vehicles, 432 guns, 250 mortars, more than 1,000 machine-guns, 1,500 horses, 20 munitions storage depots, 30,000 shells, more than a million rifle rounds, and other equipment were captured.

Battle for the city of Bobruisk (28–29 June 1944)

The destruction of the encircled German grouping southeast of Bobruisk and of the Bobruisk garrison began simultaneously on 27 June.

The town garrison, numbering more than 10,000 men, was continuously replenished by the remnants of defeated units from the XXXV Army Corps and the XXXXI Panzer Corps which trickled into the city. Units, sub-units, and even individual soldiers from the 6th, 45th, 134th, 36th, 383d, and 35th Infantry Divisions, the 20th Panzer Division, the 18th Antiaircraft Division, the Ninth Army's 551th Communications Regiment, several security battalions, et al. took shelter in the city. Major-General Hamann, the town commandant, was in charge of the defense of Bobruisk.

The Germans constructed a strong all-round defense of the town, barricaded streets, adapted homes and basements for firing points, set up wire obstacles, and densely mined the outlying areas, while extensively exploiting the local population for the work. Tanks

were dug in at intersections, and permanent stone and reinforced concrete firing points were constructed. The city was covered from the air by powerful antiaircraft fire.

The 1st Guards Don Tank Corps and the 105th Rifle Corps' units made the first attack on the town during the second half of 27 June, but were unsuccessful.

Fierce battles raged on the outskirts of the city throughout the night of 28 June. However, the enemy garrison did not surrender and continued to resist desperately.

Our forces regrouped on the morning of 28 June and prepared for a new attack against the city. The 115th Rifle Brigade reached the Berezovichi region (four kilometers northeast of Kamenka), while fulfilling the mission of penetrating into the city from the west. The 105th Rifle Corps' 356th Division concentrated along a line from Eloviki to the western bank of the Berezina River, tasked with [the mission] of penetrating into the city from the north together with tanks from the 1st Don Guards Tank Corps. The 354th Rifle Division continued to attack Bobruisk from the south.

On 28 June the *front* commander ordered the 48th Army commander to cross his army's main forces to the Berezina River's western bank and, having relieved the 3d and 65th Armies' units in the Bobruisk region, capture the city.

However, the situation in the area of the city changed sharply that night.

Having weakened his resistance on the outskirts of the city, the enemy withdrew a considerable portion of his forces to the city center under the cover of automatic weapons fire. Reconnaissance by the 356th Division on the night of 29 June established that the Germans had concentrated large infantry and artillery forces in the northern and northeastern parts of the city. Prisoners who had been captured by this division's reconnaissance revealed that 'the Bobruisk garrison—as Garrison Commandant General Hamann declared in his order—will leave the city tonight and break out to the northwest. The shock assault officer battalion will be the first to launch the attack.'

The corps commander quickly transferred a considerable portion of his artillery and his guards mortar *[katiusha]* battalion to the northwest outskirts of the city.

The 356th Division was subjected to a brief but massed fire raid from enemy artillery and mortars at 0130 hours on 29 June. Soon tanks and dense ranks of German soldiers appeared before the front, continuously firing from automatic weapons; they began to advance, attempting to break out of the encircled city to the northwest.

The German soldiers attacked the 356th Division's units with a line of officers in the vanguard. However, only a small number of them succeeded in reaching our trenches. The artillery and the guards mortar battalion, which had been transferred quickly to the 356th Division's sector, opened powerful fire on the enemy's first columns. The German attack rapidly bogged down, and they withdrew to their initial position after suffering heavy losses. German aviation was virtually of no assistance to its ground troops, flying 43 aircraft sorties on 28 June.

The Germans once again resumed their attacks at 0200 hours. Drunk to a man, soldiers and officers attacked the positions of the 1181st and 1183d Rifle Regiments (of the 356th Division). Despite the deadly fire from our artillery and mortars, the Germans, panic-stricken, tore forward. There was hand-to-hand fighting on the battlefield in the thick darkness. Our soldiers fired point blank at the on-rushing German soldiers and pierced them with their bayonets.

The 356th Division's units fought heroically for an hour, holding back the onslaught of the enemy mass pouring down upon them. At the cost of enormous losses, only at

0230 hours did the enemy manage to penetrate into the division defense and infiltrate with part of his forces into the region of the artillery firing positions.

The forward units of the 48th Army's 42d and 29th Rifle Corps, supported by powerful artillery fire, began to cross the Berezina River at 0400 hours on 29 June and entered into battle on the eastern outskirts of Bobruisk. This was at a time when the Germans had still not managed to reorganize themselves following the two night attacks. Units of the 105th Rifle Corps resumed their attacks from the west and south. Heavy street battles raged on the outskirts of the city. Drawing on his final strength, the enemy continued to defend each house stubbornly.

The 354th Rifle Division captured the train station and the adjoining apartment buildings by 0800 hours. While holding off our forces' attacks, the Germans in the northern part of the city once again concentrated large infantry forces, numbering as many as 8,000 men, and made their third and final attempt to break out of encirclement to the northwest at 0800 hours on 29 June. This time they had no firm offensive plan; they pursued only one goal—to break out of the encirclement ring and save themselves in flight.

With enormous losses, the German garrison managed to penetrate the 356th Division's defenses and dismember its forces along several axes on this morning. Having lost any and all command and control, and under continuous crossfire from the division's heroically fighting soldiers, the Germans surged into the forests through the small openings which had been formed, attempting to take shelter and find salvation in them. But it was already too late. Large numbers of our troops were already located far forward, and they cut off all withdrawal routes to the west.

With the withdrawal of part of the enemy's forces from Bobruisk, the garrison's resistance diminished considerably, and the 65th Army's forces, in close cooperation with the 48th Army's forces, had completely captured the city by 1000 hours on 29 June. Northwest of Bobruisk, however, battles continued against German units withdrawing from the city. A large enemy grouping totaling as many as 5,000 men, headed by Lieutenant-General Hoffmeister, the commander of the XXXXI Panzer Corps, attempted to break out along the highway to Osipovichi, no matter how; however, it was soon destroyed.

Thus, the 1st Belorussian Front captured the city of Bobruisk, an important communications center and a powerful German strong point covering the axes to Minsk and Baranovichi, on 29 June.

As a result of this brilliant operation, the *front*'s forces defeated the German Ninth Army's main forces and created conditions necessary to develop an aggressive offensive to Slutsk and Baranovichi in the west and to Osipovichi and Minsk in the northwest.

The enemy suffered enormous losses during the six days of intense battles. Our forces captured and destroyed 366 tanks and self-propelled guns, 2,664 guns of various calibers, 2,254 mortars, 7,404 machine-guns, and 15,922 motor vehicles. The enemy left the bodies of up to 50,000 dead soldiers and officers on the battlefield. A total of 23,680 German soldiers and officers were taken prisoner, and much equipment was captured.

CONCLUSIONS ON FIRST STAGE OF OPERATION

The first stage of the offensive operation in Belorussia continued for six days, during which Red Army forces achieved outstanding results.

The 1st Baltic Front penetrated the German defense in the general direction of Beshenkovichi by blows to the south and southwest, and encircled and destroyed the Germans' Vitebsk grouping together with the 3d Belorussian Front's right flank. Then, the 1st Baltic Front's main forces completed a wheeling movement to the northwest, with its left flank at Lepel' and its main nucleus in the sector between Lepel' and Polotsk.

The 3d Belorussian Front liquidated the Germans' Vitebsk grouping together with the 1st Baltic Front and defeated their Orsha grouping. As a result of the offensive battles, conducted in close cooperation between two *fronts* (the 3d Belorussian and 1st Baltic) and completed by the encirclement and destruction of the enemy's Vitebsk grouping and the liberation of Vitebsk, German combat and personnel losses were 77,000 men dead or taken prisoner, 495 tanks and self-propelled guns, 2,074 guns of various calibers, 1,130 mortars, 6,728 machine-guns, and 7,590 motor vehicles.

Having crushed the opposing enemy forces, the 3d Belorussian Front's main forces advanced aggressively to the Berezina River in the general direction of Borisov and Lake Palik, with powerful mobile formations leading the advancing forces. The 3d Belorussian Front's forces were in the forward echelon with respect to their neighbor to the south, the 2d Belorussian Front.

The 2d Belorussian Front penetrated the German defense along the Mogilev axis, defeated the enemy, and liberated Mogilev. Pursuing the retreating enemy, the main *front* forces reached the Drut' River on 29 June and forced it in a number of sectors.

The 1st Belorussian Front encircled and destroyed the Germans' Bobruisk grouping. While developing a subsequent offensive to the northwest and west, its main forces advanced to the Osipovichi, Pukhovichi, and Slutsk region and created a threat to the flank and rear of the enemy's central grouping, which the German command was withdrawing to Minsk.

As a result of the 1st and 2d Belorussian Fronts' offensive battles, German personnel and equipment losses amounted to 106,930 men killed or taken prisoner, 446 tanks and self-propelled guns, 3,075 guns of various calibers, 2,646 mortars, 8,464 machine-guns, and 22,072 motor vehicles.

The first stage of the operation, which was carried out with outstanding success, had decisive importance for the subsequent course of events in Belorussia. The enemy was routed on the flanks and dismembered in the center. Our forces (especially the 3d and 1st Belorussian Fronts) acquired the capability of swiftly advancing and ceaselessly pursuing the defeated enemy without permitting him to adjust and consolidate. In addition, the enemy's defeat on his flanks created a favorable prospect for a concentric offensive against Minsk to cut off his withdrawal routes and to encircle and destroy the German Fourth Army's main forces, which were withdrawing in the direction of Minsk in front of the 2d Belorussian Front.

The enemy strove to restore a front along the line passing through Polotsk, the Berezina River, and east of Slutsk by all possible means. To do so he had to stabilize both

of his flanks and withdraw his enveloped center beyond the Berezina. All available reserves were brought up to the first line.

The 14th and 95th Infantry Divisions were employed on the vitebsk axis, Vitebsk axis, the 60th Panzer Grenadier Division on the Mogilev axis, and the 20th Panzer Division on the Bobruisk axis. The consecutive commitment into into battle of divisions from the security and occupation services, as well as the commencement of the transfer of divisions from other army groups, were belated decisions by the German command. These measures could not save the situation, since these forces were inadequate, and their introduction into battle piecemeal led to their utter defeat.

The German forces could neither stop nor even slow our offensive, whose tempo reached 20–25 kilometers per day. Our victoriously attacking forces advanced around 120 kilometers and the forward units even farther during the six days.

Soviet forces entered a new stage of the Belorussian operation in the dynamics of the rapidly developing events. The principal mission was to pursue the defeated enemy aggressively on both flanks of the expanding front and to prevent the German Fourth Army from avoiding defeat in the center.

Red Army force operations in the following period proceeded with the resolution of these new and important operational missions, which arose as the result of the brilliant conduct of the first stage of the Belorussian operation.

NOTE

1. [Editor's note] The N2P was a 1941 vintage pontoon bridge park (kit), consisting of two to five pontoon ferries weighing 16–60 tons, from which a 64–160 meter bridge could be constructed in two to three hours. The NLP was a light pontoon bridge park, whose components could be used to assault, ferry or bridge a river; it consisted of 2–6 pontoons, 4–14 ferries and the materials required to erect a 77–140 meter bridge. Its components weighed 5–16 tons and it could be erected in 80 minutes.

4
The Red Army Offensive along the Polotsk-S'ventsiany, Minsk, and Slutsk-Baranovichi Axes

Seizure of Minsk and Encirclement of German Forces (Second Stage of the Operation, 29 June–4 July)

The Red Army's forces advanced aggressively, exploiting the success achieved at Vitebsk and Bobruisk, as well as along the Orsha and Mogilev axes.

The 1st Baltic Front attacked Polotsk and Glubokoe, and the 3d Belorussian Front was to force the Berezina River at Borisov and to the north, and advance further to Minsk, with its right flank advancing to Molodechno. The 2d Belorussian Front advanced to the middle reaches of the Berezina, with the subsequent mission of advancing toward Minsk. The 1st Belorussian Front exploited its attack along two axes: toward Minsk and Slutsk.

At the same time that it resolved important operational missions in its own sector of operations, the 1st Baltic Front's offensive supported the attacks by the three Belorussian *fronts* from the north, as these *fronts* advanced along converging axes toward Minsk. The 3d Belorussian Front's units hacked a road for itself [to Minsk] from the northeast, the 2d Belorussian Front moved from the east, and the 1st Belorussian Front's formations approached from the southeast.

The operations of the four *fronts* during the period 29 June-4 July, which encompassed the development of the offensive on the Polotsk-S'ventsiany, Minsk, and Slutsk-Baranovichi axes, the liberation of Minsk, Polotsk, Slutsk, and other towns, and the encirclement of German forces east of Minsk, constitute the second stage of the Belorussian operation.

CAPTURE OF POLOTSK AND DEVELOPMENT OF OFFENSIVE TO THE WEST

After capturing the road junctions and the powerful enemy strong points at Obol', Kamen', and Lepel', the 1st Baltic Front's main efforts developed in two directions: to the northwest toward Polotsk, and to the west toward Glubokoe. The capture of Polotsk had particular significance. The right flank of the *front*'s shock group supported the successful resolution of this mission and created prerequisites for advancing along the northern bank of the Western Dvina River.

The 1st Baltic Front continued to conduct a successful offensive to the northwest and west (toward Polotsk and Glubokoe) on 29–30 June. On the 4th Shock Army's left flank, the 83d Rifle Corps and the newly introduced 100th Rifle Corps had reached the Sosnitsa River line on the Kotlany, and (excluding) Prudok front by the end of 30 June. Overcoming stubborn enemy resistance and repelling his numerous counterattacks, the 22d Guards Rifle Corps advanced 16 kilometers in two days, and reached the Prudok and Goriany line.

Repelling counterattacks and overcoming strong fire resistance, two of the 6th Guards Army's rifle corps (the 103d and 23d Guards) had advanced 15–18 kilometers by the close of 30 June and were fighting on the Rzhavitsa, Zasorki, and Riabishi line. Encountering no serious enemy resistance, the 2d Guards Rifle Corps closed up into columns and marched in the general direction of Luzhki. The corps' forward detachments successfully pursued withdrawing German rear guards and were located on the approaches to Luzhki.

The 60th and 92d Rifle Corps, which had arrived after the liquidation of the enemy's Vitebsk grouping, were committed to battle on 29 and 30 June on the right flank of the 43d Army's front. While destroying separate isolated enemy groups and pursuing his withdrawing units, army forces had arrived at the Shalukhi, Kopylovshchina, Chervona Gorka, Otrubok, and Mostishche line by the end of 30 June.

The tank corps directed its principal efforts during these two days toward cutting the Molodechno-Polotsk rail line and capturing Disna. The *front* commander had already assigned the following mission to the tank corps at 2300 hours on 26 June (when *front* forces were fighting on the approaches to Kamen' and Lepel'): after capturing Kamen', the main forces were to advance in the direction of Ushacha, capture this area by the end of 27 June, and, subsequently, exploit success toward Prozoroki and cut the Molodechno-Polotsk rail line. As already mentioned in Chapter 3, the corps' units were held up at the Western Dvina, Ulla, and other river crossings, and, as a result, they essentially began to carry out their assigned missions only on 28 June. The corps' units together with the infantry succeeded in capturing Kamen' on this day and Vetrino on 29 June. Thus, although it cut the Molodechno-Polotsk rail line, the tank corps was two days late. This circumstance diminished the tank corps' success, since by this time the 2d Guards Rifle Corps' forward units had also intercepted the Molodechno-Polotsk rail line in the Zagaie region and further to the south.

On 30 June the 1st Tank Corps commander was assigned the mission to capture the Glubokoe and Luzhki region, and to capture Disna with one tank brigade and hold it until the infantry's approach. However, the tank corps only partially fulfilled this mission. As before, the tank corps' main forces advanced interspersed in the combat formations of the 2d Guards and 60th Rifle Corps and had reached the Auta River line on the Voronki, and Zadvozhe front by the end of the day. Only the 159th Tank Brigade fulfilled its mission on 30 June. After forcing the Ushacha River, this brigade covered up to 60 kilometers, and penetrated into Disna by the end of 30 June. While overcoming enemy resistance, brigade units forced the Western Dvina River and captured a small bridgehead on the river's northern bank in the Nurovo region on 1 July.

Attempting to halt the 1st Baltic Front's offensive, by 30 June the enemy had committed its operational reserves (the 201st and 221st Security Divisions) and had also transferred two infantry divisions (the 290th and 81st) from the Idritsa axis to the Polotsk

region and the 212th Infantry Division from the Pskov axis to the Lepel' region. In addition, while intensively cleaning up its rear areas, the German command committed into combat four security, six sapper-construction, and four penal battalions, the Third Panzer Army's NCO school, and a number of other special sub-units. As a rule, all of these transferred enemy units and formations were committed to battle from the march, without any preparation whatsoever, and, as a result, they suffered enormous losses, with individual units being completely destroyed.

The German command focused particular attention on the Polotsk axis. In addition to the two infantry divisions (the 205th and 24th) that had already been operating in the region, it committed an additional two divisions (the 290th and 81st). The German command endeavored to hold Polotsk at any price, as an important strong point and a large railroad junction that threatened our shock group's flank. The remnants of the enemy's 252d and 95th Infantry divisions, which had been defeated in earlier battles, and units of the newly arrived 212th Infantry Division and the 201st and 221st Security Divisions, were operating along the Disna, Germanoviche, and Glubokoe axes. It should be mentioned that the combat value of these units was not very high. To a considerable degree, this made it easy for our forces to capture Disna and Germanoviche.

In connection with the 1st Baltic Front's planned wheel to the northwest, the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command changed the boundary between the 1st and 3d Baltic Fronts. The 1st Baltic Front's left boundary line was adjusted somewhat northward of its previous line, and after 30 June it ran along the Lepel', Pustosel'e, and Paraf'ianov line.

Having evaluated the existing situation on 30 June, the *front* commander decided that the shock group's right flank would launch an offensive against Polotsk on the morning of 1 July and capture the city by the end of the day. The left flank would develop the offensive in the directions of Germanoviche and Glubokoe.

To execute the mission of capturing Polotsk, the 4th Shock Army's left flank (the 100th and 83d Rifle Corps) was to advance from the line of the Sosnitsa River in the general direction of Posdniaki. The 22d Guards Rifle Corps (which was directly subordinated to the *front* commander) attacked Polotsk from the Goriany region along the northern bank of the Western Dvina, while the 23d Guards Rifle Corps (from the 6th Guards Army) attacked the city's southern outskirts from the Lake Usomlia region.

The 6th Guards Army's left-flank 2d Guards Rifle Corps received the mission to develop the offensive toward Luzhki and Germanoviche and to capture the Germanoviche region by the end of 1 July. Subsequently, the corps was to advance against Sharkovshchizna and Iody. Simultaneously, General Bagramian ordered the 6th Guards Army commander to withdraw the 103d Rifle Corps from battle and move it in the direction of Vetrino and Disna, with the mission of destroying the enemy in the sector between the Western Dvina and the Bagno-Mekh swamp. [The corps] was to reach the Drissa and Sulabo line by the close of 2 July.

The *front* commander assigned the following mission to the 43d Army: the main forces were to reach the Lake Mniuta, Gvozdovo, Krulevshchizna, and Dokshitse line by the close of 1 July, with the forward units 10–15 kilometers to the west.

Combat operations along Polotsk axis

The 4th Shock Army's left-flank forces (the 100th and 83d Rifle Corps), as well as the 6th Guards Army's 22d and 23d Guards Rifle Corps, launched the attack against Polotsk on the morning of 1 July. Making extensive use of engineer obstacles, the enemy infantry divisions, which were defending along the Polotsk axis, resisted advancing units fiercely with all types of fire and counterattacks. The 4th Shock Army had advanced 20 kilometers and reached the Zhadunok, Pozdniaki, and Gromy line by the end of 1 July. The 22d Rifle Corps' units succeeded in reaching the immediate approaches to the city. The offensive on the 23d Guards Rifle Corps' front was developing somewhat more slowly. While overcoming strong enemy resistance, the corps' units advanced four-six kilometers.

Without halting the offensive, the 4th Shock Army advanced up to ten kilometers on 2 July and cut the Polotsk-Idritsa rail line. The 22d Guards Rifle Corps broke enemy resistance and penetrated to the eastern outskirts of the city. Repelling numerous German counterattacks, the 51st Guards Rifle Division (of the 23d Guards Rifle Corps) cleared the entire left-bank part of the town and reached the Western Dvina during the day. Fearing that our forces would capture the railroad bridge, the enemy blew it up beforehand. The German command held the wooden bridge (which was located south of the railroad station), which was ready to be blown up, until the last moment, since it served as a connecting link between the enemy garrisons in the northern and southern parts of city. When the division approached the river, it discovered that only the center spans of the railroad bridge had been blown up, and that these were partially submerged in the water. Sub-units of the 154th Guards Rifle Regiment were quick to take advantage of this fact, and they swiftly crossed to the river's northern bank and captured a small bridgehead.

Divisional units which had reached the river discovered that the enemy had not managed to blow up the wooden bridge. Sub-units of the 156th Guards Rifle Regiment killed the German sub-machine-gunners covering the crossing and captured the bridge. Two rifle companies, a part of the battalion and regimental guns, and two tanks quickly rushed along the bridge. The sub-units that had crossed consolidated their positions on the river's northern bank. The subsequent crossing was, however, disrupted. The bridge, which had been prepared for destruction by the Germans, blew up.

Exploiting the bridgeheads they had captured the previous day, divisional units forced the river and penetrated to the center of the city on 3 July. The 51st Guards Division's success considerably facilitated the 22d Guards Rifle Corps' attack on the city. The street fighting in Polotsk continued all day on 3 July and on the night of 4 July. The enemy launched counterattacks attempting to hold the city no matter what. In the city itself, the enemy conducted up to ten counterattacks on 3 July alone, each with forces from a company to a battalion supported by tanks and self-propelled artillery.

Our 3d Air Army aviation displayed considerable activity. There were a total of 756 aircraft sorties during the day, a great part of which were in support of our offensive against Polotsk. Dominating the skies above the battlefield, our aviation bombed and assaulted the enemy's combat formations. German air operations were quite limited: only individual aircraft, which did little damage, appeared above Polotsk during the day.

After the fierce street combat by the 22d Guards Rifle Corps attacking from the east and the 51st Guards Division attacking from the south, Polotsk was completely cleared of the enemy by the morning of 4 July. After the seizure of Polotsk, the enemy's 81st, 290th, and 24th Infantry Divisions began to withdraw rapidly to the northwest, having suffered considerable losses.

The skillful and energetic operations of Major-General Chernikov's 51st Guards Rifle Division during the battles for Polotsk merit attention. The units boldly and decisively exploited the enemy's negligence in blowing up bridges by swiftly crossing to the Western Dvina's northern bank and capturing the bridgeheads. Subsequently, the division widened the captured bridgeheads, penetrated to the center of the city, and disrupted the entire German defense system where the enemy least expected it.

The 4th Shock Army's left flank continued the successful offensive during the battles for Polotsk and was fighting on the Sheverlivka, Dokhnary, and Baturina line by the end of 4 July. After occupying Polotsk and regrouping, the 22d Guards Rifle Corps completed a march to the Vetrino region, where it joined the 6th Guards Army. Two of the 23d Guards Rifle Corps' divisions had reached the Western Dvina on the front from Druchany to Vinogrody by the end of 4 July. After capturing Polotsk, the 51st Guards Rifle Division marched in the direction of Disna.

Exploitation of success to west

The left-flank forces of the 6th Guards Army (the 2d Guards Rifle Corps) and the 43d Army continued to advance toward Germanoviche and Glubokoe. The 2d Guards Corps units (with the assistance of two of the tank corps' brigades) captured Germanoviche on 1 July. The 92d Rifle Corps, together with 1st Tank Corps' units, captured Glubokoe on 3 July. After the seizure of Germanoviche and Glubokoe, the forces continued to develop a decisive offensive to the west. Destroying separate isolated enemy groups southwest of Drissa, the 103d Rifle Corps and two of its divisions had reached the Trudy, Kisliaki, and Popki line by the end of 4 July. The 154th Rifle Division had concentrated in the Vinogrody region and further to the south. The 2d Guards Rifle Corps had reached the Usiany, Opsa, and Bogin' line. Having captured Duniloviche and Miazdel on 4 July, the 43d Army had reached the Koziany, Kuropole, Chashkovshchizna, Gruzdovo, and Miazdel line by the close of the day. The 1st Tank Corps had been concentrated in the Sharkovshchizna region by day's end on 4 July in order to bring its units into order and to prepare for subsequent operations.

Thus, within six days (from 29 June through 4 July), while pursuing the withdrawing enemy, the 6th Guards Army's left flank and also the 43d Army's forces had advanced 120–140 kilometers, averaging 20–23 kilometers per day. As a result of these successful combat operations, from the beginning of the offensive until 4 July, *front* forces had liberated up to 5,000 cities, towns, and villages (including Polotsk, Beshenkovichi, Lepel', Glubokoe, Dokshitse, and Disna). During this period they destroyed as many as 37,000 enemy soldiers and officers, 272 guns, 85 mortars, 1,457 motor vehicles, 78 aircraft, and much more equipment. In addition, the *front*'s forces took as many as 7,000 soldiers and officers prisoner and captured 311 guns, 1,093 machine-guns, 83 mortars, 1,866 motor vehicles, and much more combat equipment.

As mentioned in chapter 1, the operational plan envisioned the arrival of the 1st Baltic Front's forces at the Zelenyi Gorodok, and Krulevshchizna line on the tenth or eleventh day of the offensive. The *front* fulfilled this mission considerably earlier, in particular, in the center and on the left flank. The 1st Baltic Front's forces were already 60–90 kilometers west of the indicated line on the eleventh day of the operation.

Subsequently, with regard to the newly planned axis for the 1st Baltic Front's offensive (to Kaunas), the *front*'s composition changed. In accordance with a decision by the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command, the following entered into the *front*'s composition on 3 July: the 39th Army from the 3d Belorussian Front, and the 2d Guards and 51st Armies, which had arrived from Crimea. The 4th Shock Army, along with its operational sector, was transferred to the 2d Baltic Front at 2400 on 4 July.

Thus, the 1st Baltic Front was reinforced considerably to execute its subsequent missions, and already included five armies (the 6th Guards, 43d, 39th, 51st, and 2d Guards).

3D BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S FORCING OF BEREZINA RIVER AND CAPTURE OF BORISOV: OFFENSIVE ALONG MOLODECHNO AXIS AND TOWARD MINSK

Forcing of the Berezina and capture of Borisov

The arrival of the cavalry-mechanized group's units at the Berezina River on 28 June essentially concluded the first stage of the 3d Belorussian Front's operation. The forces on the *front*'s right flank had basically executed the missions assigned to them four days earlier than indicated.

Consequently, the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command issued a new directive (No. 220124) on 28 June. [The directive] ordered the 3d Belorussian Front to force the Berezina from the march, and, while enveloping encountered enemy strong points, to develop an aggressive offensive toward Minsk and toward Molodechno with its right flank. [The *front*'s] forces were to capture Minsk in cooperation with the 2d Belorussian Front and occupy Molodechno with its right flank no later than 7–8 July. At the same time, while expressing dissatisfaction with the slowness of the 5th Guards Tank Army's offensive, the *Stavka* demanded that it display bold and decisive actions suited to the existing situation. [It also demanded] a necessary intensity of efforts on the part of the infantry so that it could keep up with the tank and cavalry formations operating in front of it to every possible degree.

While fulfilling the *Stavka* orders, the *front*'s forward units captured a number of bridgeheads on the Berezina's western bank on 29 June. Operating across a broad front, the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps' units struck down the enemy's screen along the Berezina and, with a swift leap forward, reached the Babtsy, Tartak, and Zagor'e region, having penetrated 5–10 kilometers. After the 35th Guards Tank Brigade captured the populated area of Mstizh and cut the Begomil' and Zembin highway, the corps' units began to exploit the attack to the south along the enemy front.

The 3d Guards Cavalry Corps operations were less successful. Having concentrated to cross [the river] in the narrow sector between Veselovo Sovkhoz [State Farm] and

Bytcha, the corps' units fought for the crossings in this region for a day and a half. The 6th Guards Cavalry Division's forward sub-units succeeded in crossing to the Berezina's western bank in the Studenka region only by the end of 29 June.

At the same time, the 5th Army's forces advanced rapidly despite the swampy and forested nature of the terrain. Covering more than 30 kilometers in a single day, they overtook the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps.

Partisans contributed significantly to the rapid advance of our forces in this sector. They pointed out to forward units the most convenient routes for movement through the large forest tracts and swamps, they protected crossings, and they protected the flanks of the main force's advancing columns.

Having smashed the resistance of enemy covering detachments, the 5th Army's forward units (forces of up to a regiment from each first-echelon division) forced the Berezina from the march and captured bridgeheads on its western bank north of Lake Palik in the Kal'nik, Starina, and Selets regions.

Advancing in echelon behind the 5th Army, the 11th Guards Army proceeded more slowly. Having encountered stubborn resistance from enemy covering detachments on the Kholopenichi and Krupki road, the 16th and 8th Guards Corps fought on the line north and south of Kholopenichi and west of Krupki during 29 June.

Advancing along the Minsk Highway, the 5th Guards Tank Army's 3d Guards Tank Corps captured Loshchinitsa and Bol'shie Ukholody, and the 29th Guards Tank Corps' forward detachments reached the Berezina north of Borisov.

While exploiting the advance of the 5th Guards Tank Army and the 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Corps (the latter was developing the offensive toward Ukhvala), the 31st Army advanced 40 kilometers on 29 June. Pursuing defeated units of the 78th and 260th Infantry and the 25th Panzer Grenadier Divisions, the army's forces reached the Bobr River south of Krupki by the end of the day, having advanced almost parallel to the 11th Guards Army.

Thus, the right flank of the *front*'s forces had already crossed the Berezina in a number of sectors and captured bridgeheads on its western bank on 29 June. The forcing of the Berezina in the *front*'s center was proceeding more slowly. Here, enemy units from the 5th Panzer Division and remnants of the 14th and 95th Infantry Divisions resisted more stubbornly, attempting to prevent our forces from reaching Borisov, the principal strong point on the Berezina covering the Minsk axis. However, the arrival of tank units from the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps on the river's western bank and their advance to the south were already threatening the flank of the Germans' Borisov grouping.

The *front*'s forces continued the offensive on 30 June, and its main forces reached and began to force the Berezina.

While exploiting the success achieved by its forward units on the previous day, the 5th Army smashed the resistance by units from the 391st Security, 299th Infantry, and 201st Security Divisions and forced the Berezina with three divisions. Having widened the captured bridgeheads, the army advanced 8–15 kilometers and reached the Begoml', Mstizh, and Zavidnoe line. At the same time, the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps continued to develop its attack southward along the western bank. The 8th Guards Motorized Brigade reached the Zavidnoe region, while the 35th Guards Tank Brigade captured Pleshchenitsy, having cut the Vileika-Borisov highway. This threatened not only the flank but also the rear of the enemy's Borisov group.

Simultaneously, two divisions from the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps crossed to the Berezina's western bank in the Studenka region and reached the Logi, Chervonnaia Rudiia, and Liakhovka region (15–20 kilometers northwest of Borisov).

Having smashed the enemy resistance, the 11th Guards Army reached the banks of the Berezina, and its two left-flank divisions forced it south of Borisov. Having advanced to Borisov, the 11th Guards Army's units that had crossed the river engaged in battle on the southeast approaches to the town.

At the same time, the 5th Guards Tank Army had reached the Bytcha and Glivin line and, together with the 11th Guards Army's units, conducted an attack against Borisov, having begun to fight on its northeastern and eastern approaches. Continuing its aggressive pursuit of the withdrawing enemy, the 31st Army covered more than 30 kilometers and reached the Bol'shie Ukholody, Drozdina, and Vydritsa front, while its right flank approached the banks of the Berezina River.

Thus, the units of the *front*'s 5th and 11th Guards Army's units forced the Berezina River in several sectors from Begoml' to Glivin during the day and advanced along the western bank to a depth of 8–12 kilometers, having joined battle on the immediate approaches to Borisov. At the same time, the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps captured this town by means of a deep strike by the 35th Guards Tank Brigade against Pleshchenitsy and cut the Borisov-Vileika Highway.

While striving to contain our offensive, the enemy tried to organize a defense along the Berezina's western bank. The German command exerted its main efforts on the Borisov axis. The enemy counterattacked several times in the Borisov region and further north on 30 June, but all counterattacks were repelled.

Simultaneously, enemy aviation became more active. Flying in groups of 18 aircraft each, the Germans attempted to apply pressure to our crossings and to attack the forces approaching them. Our aviation, however, reliably covered our combat formations and prevented the enemy from thwarting the crossing. Our aviation made 603 aircraft sorties on 29–30 June, shooting down nine enemy aircraft in air battles. Our ground attack aircraft and bombers that were supporting the units carrying out the crossing effectively attacked enemy forces and equipment along the Borisov-Pleshchenitsy and Borisov-Logoisk roads.

The *Stavka* established a new boundary line between the 1st Baltic and 3d Belorussian Fronts at 1200 hours on 30 June. It ran from Chashniki north of the earlier established line, through Lepel' and Pustosel'e to Paraf'ianov.

Consequently, the *front* commander ordered the 5th Army on 30 June to develop the offensive in the direction of Dolginovo and Vileika.

On the same day, the commander of the cavalry-mechanized group, Lieutenant-General Oslikovsky, ordered the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps to develop a decisive attack toward Vileika. Meanwhile, the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps was to develop its attack toward Molodechno with the mission of capturing both areas by day's end on 2 July.

The 11th Guards Army penetrated into Borisov by means of an attack by the 83d and 5th Guards Rifle Divisions from the south and southwest on the night of 1 July, and captured the town by 0300 hours in cooperation with units from the 31st and 5th Guards Tank Army. Exploiting success, the army's right flank had advanced 25 kilometers by the end of 1 July, reaching the Pleshchenitsy-Logoisk Highway. After the battle for Borisov, the army's 8th Guards Rifle Corps reached the Brodnia River, ten kilometers west of the

town. Because of the large crossing load, the 36th Guards Rifle Corps continued to remain in second echelon on the [river's] eastern bank.

Having forced the Berezina, part of the 31st Army's forces participated in the battles for Borisov, while the main forces reached the Brodnia and Zaruch'e front.

The 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps, which had been subordinated to the 31st Army commander on 30 June, crossed the Berezina River at Cherniavka, having dispatched a forward detachment to the Borisov-Zabashevichi road.

The 5th Guards Tank Army continued to cross the Berezina on 1 July and was in the Borisov region by the end of the day.

At the same time, while operating in the center of the *front*, the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps' main forces had reached the Begoml'-Pleshchenitsy Highway (from Omnishevo to Pleshchenitsy) and was developing the offensive toward Vileika. On the right flank, its forward detachments had reached the Vilia River in the Greblia region and, on the left flank, [they had] captured Pushchnika (on the Pleshchenitsy-Vileika Highway) by the end of the day. Having completed its crossing, all of the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps' forces had concentrated in the Logi, Chervonnaia Rudnia, and Likhovka region. Its 5th Guards Cavalry Division was fighting in the region south of Logi against covering units, which the Germans had sent from Berezino.

Having captured the large town of Begoml' and a number of others to the south, the 5th Army reached the Budilovka and Tsia front astride the Begoml'-Pleshchenitsy Highway, and continued the offensive in the direction of Dolginovo.

Continuing to provide cover for the *front*'s main forces' crossings over the Berezina, the 1st Air Army intensified its attacks against enemy forces and rear areas. Ground attack aircraft and bombers destroyed German forces and equipment in the Vileika, Molodechno, Krasnoe, Zhodino, and Smolevichi regions. They conducted 2,432 aircraft sorties in a single day. Six enemy aircraft were shot down in air battles.

As a result of the four days of combat (from 28 June through 1 July), the *front*'s forces completely forced the Berezina and extended the bridgehead on its western bank up to 110 kilometers along the front and 35 kilometers into the depth. Our forces delivered shattering blows against the enemy's 5th Panzer Division, the 24th and 26th SS Police Regiments, the 2d SS Machine Gun Regiment, the 201st and 286th Security Divisions, and the 260th Infantry Division's 470th Regiment during these battles. As a result, the Germans suffered considerable losses. Special units of the Germans' VI and XXVII Army Corps were utterly defeated.

In dead alone the enemy lost 22,570 soldiers and officers, as well as the following equipment: 145 tanks, 28 self-propelled guns, 162 guns of varied caliber, 47 mortars, 2,799 motor vehicles, 752 transports, and 180 horses. *Front* forces took 13,256 German soldiers and officers prisoner, and captured 33 self-propelled guns, 112 guns of varied caliber, 2,133 motor vehicles, 1,365 railroad cars, and 107 storage depots with ammunition, food, and other military goods.

Thanks to our forces' rapid advance and our forward detachments' swift operations, the enemy did not succeed in organizing a defense along the Berezina's western bank. As a rule, the units that he brought forward from the reserve were subjected to attacks on the march and were defeated before they managed to occupy prepared positions.

The enemy resisted most stubbornly along the Borisov axis. Here he employed the 5th Panzer Division, which had been transferred from Kovel'. However, the rapid forcing of

the Berezina by the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps' units north of Lake Palik and their arrival in the Zembin and Pleshchenitsy regions by 30 June threatened the flank and rear of the entire Borisov grouping. At the same time, the forcing of the Berezina south of Borisov by units of the 11th Guards Army and their attacks from the south and southwest, combined with the attacks by the 5th Guards Tank Army's units from the north and northeast, determined the fate of the Germans' Borisov grouping.

Development of offensive toward Vileika and along Molodechno Axis. Liberation of Minsk

Having been unsuccessful at the Berezina and thrown back from it to the west, the enemy attempted to resist on a line from Budslav through Dolginovo to east of Il'ia, and along the Logoisk and Smolevichi line. The German command committed security formations and various special-designation sub-units into battle in order to reinforce their defeated units. Thus, the 391st and 201st Security Divisions and the 330th Security Battalion had already been committed on the 5th and 11th Guards Armies' fronts, and construction battalions and SS police units appeared on the Minsk axis.

The enemy resisted primarily in populated areas and at road junctions, while operating with uncoordinated groups numbering 100–300 men with tanks and self-propelled guns. Our mobile units and forward detachments, which were operating in front of our forces did not engage in frontal battles. Instead, they enveloped and by-passed enemy strong points by swift maneuvers and unexpectedly turned up in the deep rear, threatening the German garrisons with encirclement.

The 3d Guards Mechanized Corps' forward detachments crossed the Viliia River on the night of 2 July and penetrated into Vileika and Kurenets at dawn. After a short battle, we occupied both areas. Smashing the German screens, other corps' units penetrated to the main Minsk-Vilnius rail line on the same day and fought to capture Krasnoe. Having captured Krasnoe, our units cut the German lines of communications from Minsk to Vilnius and Lida, thus isolating the enemy's Minsk grouping from the northwest. Exploiting success, the corps' forward units had already reached the Naroch' and Mikhnevichi line (12 kilometers east of Smorgon') by the end of the day, having covered more than 70 kilometers in a single day.

While advancing in the directions of Budslav and Dolginovo, the 5th Army crushed the 406th Regiment (of the 201st Security Division), the 330th Security Battalion, and other smaller units and liberated more than 230 towns and villages on this day, including Paraf' ianov, Budslav, and Dolginovo. While covering more than 30 kilometers on this day, the army's 72d and 65th Rifle Corps reached a front from Paraf'ianov, west of Dolginovo to Liubhcha front by the end of the day. The army's 45th Rifle Corps, which constituted the second echelon, was on the march in the Veretei, Shamovka, and Ol'koviche region.

The 11th Guards Army captured the large town of Logoisk by mid-day on 2 July by means of attacks by its right flank from the northeast. Its main forces were fighting against enemy covering units on the line northwest and west of Logoisk, with the 36th Guards Rifle Corps in the second echelon in the forests south and southeast of Chervonnaia Rudnia.

Having finished its crossing of the Berezina, the 5th Guards Army reached the Logoisk and Padonki region.

While continuing to fight in the Ukhvala and Orekhovka region with part of its 113th Rifle Corps' forces against German groups attempting to break out to link up with their units, the 31st Army's main forces advanced more than 25 kilometers on 2 July and arrived north of Smolevichi.

Having completed its crossing of the Berezina, the 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps developed the offensive north of the Minsk Highway and captured Zhodino and Smolevichi on this day, having concentrated in the region north and south of Smolevichi by the end of the day.

Ground attack aircraft and bombers from the 1st Air Army attacked the Molodechno and Minsk regions, conducting 660 aircraft sorties on this day. Six German troop trains were set on fire as a result of bombing attacks against Molodechno Station. Our aviation destroyed 11 enemy aircraft in the air and at airfields on this day of combat.

The capture of Vileika and Krasnoe by the 3d Belorussian Front on 2 July had great importance, especially if one considers that, at the same time, the 1st Belorussian Front (which was advancing southwest of Minsk) had captured the towns of Stolbtsy, Gorodzei, and Nesvizh by means of a swift cavalry and tank attack, thus cutting the German lines of communication from Minsk to Brest and Luninets. Thanks to these successes, the entire German Minsk grouping and its forces operating in front of the 2d Belorussian Front were isolated and deprived of their most important lines of communication. Subsequently, the attacks in the direction of Minsk by the 3d and 1st Belorussian Fronts created conditions for the encirclement of the main forces of the enemy's Fourth Army, as well as the remnants of his Third Panzer and Ninth Armies.

The *front* commander, Army-General Cherniakhovsky, issued the following directives on the night of 3 July:

- To the commander of the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps—Capture the Smorgon', Benitsa, and Zaskevichi region by the end of 3 July and consolidate along it before the infantry's arrival at the Vileika and Molodechno line; be prepared to continue the offensive in the direction of Vilnius on the morning of the 4th;
- To the commander of the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps—While demanding maximum intensity of efforts from [your] units, capture the Molodechno and Grudek region by decisive operations;
- To the commander of the 5th Army—Having dispatched a powerful forward detachment to secure the Vileika region, reach the Neviary (28 kilometers west of Paraf'ianov), Gorodishche, Kurenets, and Vileika region with the main forces by the end of the day;
- To the commander of the 11th Guards Army—Energetically continue the offensive and capture the Poniatyche, Krasnoe, Radoshkovichi, and Petrishki line by the close of 3 July, while dispatching forward detachments to occupy Molodechno and Grudek;
- To the commander of the 5th Army—Cooperating with the 31st Army and the 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps, capture Minsk by the end of 3 July by means of an attack from the north and northwest. Then, after leaving a garrison in the town until the infantry's approach, advance the army's main forces to the region 30 kilometers west of Minsk (Rakuv, Volma, and Sloboda); and

- To the commander of the 31st Army—Continue the offensive energetically and capture the Luskovo (18 kilometers north of Minsk), Zabolot'e, and Kolodishchi line by the end of 3 July. The 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps, reinforced with infantry and artillery detachments and cooperating with the 5th Guards Tank Army, is to capture Minsk by the end of 3 July by attacking from the east and southeast.

Units of the 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps, supported by forward detachments from the 31 Army's 71st and 36th Rifle Corps and cooperating with the 5th Guards Tank Army, captured Minsk at 0900 hours on 3 July following a decisive attack and an enveloping maneuver from the northwest. Units from the 1st Belorussian Front's 1st Guards Don Tank Corps reached the southern and southeastern outskirts of the city at about 1300 hours on the same day. The 3d Army's forces followed them.

Thus, the encirclement ring, within which a large German force grouping was located east of Minsk, was closed. [The encirclement] included the remnants of enemy divisions that were withdrawing in front of the 2d Belorussian Front and units and formations that had been thrown back from the north and south by the 3d and 1st Belorussian Fronts' rapid advance.

Exploiting its achieved success, the 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Corps advanced an additional 10–12 kilometers west and southwest of Minsk and reached the region southeast of Ratomka, Novyi Dvor, and Maksimilovo by the end of 3 July.

Covering 26–52 kilometers in the course of the day, the 31st Army's 71st Rifle Corps reached a line west of Ostroshitskii, Gorodok, and Malinovka during the second half of the day.

The 31st Army's 36th Rifle Corps had concentrated in Minsk.

After the battle for Minsk, the 5th Guards Tank Army advanced to the northwest of the city and halted on the Zaslavl' and Ratomka line, having encountered enemy resistance.

The 11th Guards Army's forces advanced 25–35 kilometers on 3 July and captured the Belorussian SSR's large regional center of Radoshkovichi, as well as more than 100 other towns and villages. The army's main forces had reached the Raiuvka (12 kilometers northeast of Krasnoe), Radoshkovichi, and Kozekovo line by the end of the day. The 36th Guards Rifle Corps was located in the Logoisk region.

Having fulfilled their missions of the day, the 5th Army's 72d and 65th Rifle Corps arrived along the Neviary, Kurenets, Vileika, and Poniatyche front. The 45th Rifle Corps' Divisions had concentrated in the Vereten, Shamovki and Ol'koviche regions.

The cavalry-mechanized group was unable to carry out the mission assigned to it on 3 July. Having encountered strong resistance on the part of the security units which the enemy had just brought forward, the units of the group's 3d Guards Mechanized Corps fought north of Smorgon' all day, while the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps fought on the northern and northeastern outskirts of Molodechno.

The *front*'s forces continued to develop the offensive on 4 July.

Having received the mission to capture the Lake Naroch', Kolodki, (excluding) and Zaskevichi line and send out forward detachments to capture Viliia River crossings north of Smorgon', the 5th Army reached the indicated line by day's end.

The 11th Guards Army reached the Minsk-Molodechno rail line in the Krasnoe region and to the south.

The 5th Guards Tank Army conducted a fighting advance and reached the Rakuv and Volma line.

The 31st Army reached the front from Petrishki, west of Zaslavl', to west of Ratomka, having moved the 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps to Rakuv.

The cavalry-mechanized group continued to fight for Smorgon', Lebedzev, and Molodechno, while clearing the remaining enemy infantry and automatic weapons groups from the town and Molodechno Station.

Thus, as a result of the second stage of the offensive, the 3d Belorussian Front achieved enormous operational success. Thanks to the decisiveness of the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps' operations and the rapid advance by the *front*'s right flank, the enemy was unable to hold back our offensive to the Berezina River.

The subsequent attack by the *front*'s mobile forces against Vileika and Krasnoe isolated the main German forces grouped along the Minsk axis from the northwest and deprived them of the possibility of being based on one of the principal Minsk-Vilnius highways. At the same time, it threatened them with envelopment from the north. In these circumstances, the German command strove to withdraw the main forces of its Fourth Army as rapidly as possible to occupy new defensive positions in the depths, once they had been brought into order [reformed]. However, we forestalled the enemy. Having already occupied Minsk on 3 July, the 3d Belorussian Front's mobile formations, together with the 1st Belorussian Front's forces, cut off all German withdrawal routes to the west and created a new 'pocket' for them east of Minsk.

2D BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S ADVANCE AND PURSUIT OF ENEMY IN THE DIRECTION OF MINSK: ENCIRCLEMENT OF GERMAN FORCES EAST OF MINSK

Missions of front*'s forces*

The 2d Belorussian Front's forces had fulfilled the subsequent mission assigned to them by the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command's 31 May Directive No. 220112 by 29 June. [It] demanded, 'Subsequently, the main forces are to force the Dnepr River, capture Mogilev, and develop the offensive in the general direction of Berezino and Smilovichi.'

The pursuit of the Germans was conducted at an ever-increasing tempo. The front's formations forced the Drut' River on a broad front on 29 June and continued to advance decisively, having begun to carry out *Stavka* Directive No. 220123, dated 28 June, which supplemented the 31 May directive. This directive required that the 2d Belorussian Front's forces cross the Berezina River from the march no later than 30 June–1 July, and, while by-passing enemy strong points that they encountered, develop a swift offensive in the general direction of Minsk. This directive also required that the *front* capture Minsk in cooperation with the 3d Belorussian Front's left flank and the 1st Belorussian Front's right flank and reach the Svisloch' River's western bank no later than 7–8 July.

The 2d Belorussian Front commander ordered the 33d, 49th, and 50th Armies to continue the energetic pursuit of the enemy on 29 July and assigned the armies' main forces the mission to reach the Berezina River by the end of 30 June.

Pursuit of Germans west of Drut' River

Having forced the Drut' River, the *front*'s forces continued their advance to the west on 30 June in continuous battle. Our right-flank formations and those in the center repelled German counterattacks, which were aimed at halting the armies' advance. The destruction of isolated encircled enemy groupings continued in separate sectors.

The enemy continued to withdraw to the west on 30 June with mixed groups from the defeated XXVII, XII, and XXXIX Corps. The Germans counterattacked with forces from an infantry battalion to an infantry regiment, supported by tanks and self-propelled guns, in separate sectors. The half-encircled remnants of the 260th and 110th Infantry Divisions, the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division, and sub-units from the 287th Security Division, counterattacked in front of the *front*'s right flank in an attempt to break out to the west.

Part of the 33d Army' forces continued combat operations to destroy the German grouping consisting of the remnants of the 260th and 110th Infantry Divisions, the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division, and also specialized and security sub-units with 40 to 50 tanks that were half-encircled in the region east and southeast of Krucha. The army's forces fought along its flanks and advanced in nearly constant combat. The 62d Rifle Corps' right flank reached the Ugliany region and four-five kilometers to the south by the end of the day, while on the left flank the 157th Rifle Division, which had been brought up from the reserve, forced the Drut' River and reached the Bovsevichi region. This location of the flanks, which was hanging over the German grouping in the region north and northeast of Teterin, ensured the latter's swift and complete liquidation.

Having overcome the resistance of enemy covering detachments (which was especially strong in the direction of the Mogilev-Minsk Highway), the 49th Army's right-flank corps advanced 35–40 kilometers. The units of the 69th Rifle Corps reached the Zhurovka region, and those of the 70th Corps reached the Iagodka region. While driving back enemy covering detachments (from the remnants of the destroyed German 337th, 12th, and 110th Infantry Divisions, the 18th Panzer Grenadier Division, and the 113th Combat Group), the 81st Rifle Corps advanced up to ten kilometers along the Minsk Highway axis and reached the Lake Chernoe and Malinovka line by the end of the day.

Overcoming stubborn resistance by reinforced enemy rear guards in front of its right flank and center, the 50th Army continued its pursuit through untrafficable swampy and wooded terrain. Having advanced 10–40 kilo-meters, the army's forward detachment on the left flank reached the Berezina River in the Vol'nitskii Bor and Svisloch' sector by the end of 30 June.

The 4th Air Army continued to destroy enemy personnel and equipment on the roads and in assembly areas by bombings and ground attacks in the regions east of Berezino. It conducted 202 aircraft sorties on 30 June. Five enemy aircraft were shot down and two were damaged in the air battles. Only individual German aircraft sorties were noted over the *front*'s force dispositions during the day.

The pursuit developed successfully. Enveloping German covering groups, the *front*'s forces encircled and destroyed them without lowering the tempo of their westward advance.

Arrival of the front*'s forces at the Berezina River and forcing of the river*

The *front* commander issued an order on 1 July for the 33d, 49th, and 50th Armies to continue their pursuit of the enemy, while destroying his separate encircled groupings. Additionally, the 49th and 50th Armies were given instructions on 1 July for their forward units to replace those of the 3d Army, which were fighting against the remnants of German divisions in the Pogost, Leshnitsa, Negonichi, and Podvoloshka region, and to develop the offensive aggressively along the Minsk highway. The 50th Army commander was ordered to establish close cooperation with his left neighbor—the 3rd Army Commander, Colonel-General Gorbatov.

The *front*'s forces continued their offensive in the direction of Minsk on 1 July, smashing reinforced enemy covering detachments and destroying separate German groups which remained in our rear. The enemy's rear guard units resisted most stubbornly on the right flank, in the 33d Army's sector and in the Pogost region in the center. Our forces in the center had reached the Berezina River crossings at Berezino by the end of the day and began to force the river. On the left flank, the 50th Army, two of whose corps had forced the river, continued to develop the offensive to the northwest.

The *front*'s air forces attacked German personnel and equipment in the region west of Berezino by means of ground attacks and bombings and conducted 600 aircraft sorties on 1 July.

Subsequent boundary lines were established between the armies on the night of 2 July: between the 33d and 49th Armies—up to Zhurovka (as before), and further from Zhornovka through Ol'khovka, Dubovruch'e, Grebenka, Drachkovo, and Apchak to Chizhovka (all inclusive for the 33d Army); and between the 49th and 50th Armies—up to Mostishche (as before), and further from Miroslavka through Gorki, Derti, Ivanichi, Iurets, and Dukora to Zarez'e (all inclusive for the 49th Army).

The 2d Belorussian Front's forces continued to pursue the enemy, who was withdrawing to the west, on 2 July, repelled numerous counterattacks on the right flank and in the center, and destroyed separate isolated German groups which remained encircled because of the swift advance and enveloping maneuver of our forces. The *front*'s formations advanced up to 30 kilometers during the day and crossed to the Berezina River's western bank in all of the armies' sectors.

The 33d Army had reached the Berezina River by the end of the day and was continuing to force it across the entire expanse of its sector. Part of its forces destroyed an enemy sub-unit encircled in the Orekhovka region, which consisted of more than a battalion of infantry with tanks and self-propelled guns. The army captured up to 300 prisoners, eight tanks, 12 multi-tube mortars *[nebelwerfer]*, and other equipment in this action.

Having overcome stiff enemy resistance on its right flanks, part of the 49th Army's 69th Rifle Corps forced the Berezina River and, having captured Zhoronovka, fought for Berezino. Attacking along the Minsk Highway, the 81st Corps captured Pogost and Leshnitsa, and reached the Berezina River's eastern bank by the end of the day. [The corps] prepared to force the river at night and to continue moving westward. Advancing in heavy fighting, the 70th Rifle Corps had reached the Berezina River's eastern bank by the end of the day, and one division had forced the river north of Miroslavka.

Having advanced 18–40 kilometers, the 50th Army's right-flank 121st Corps reached the Berezina River at Miroslavka. Meanwhile, advancing to the northwest, its 38th and 19th Corps approached the Minsk Highway by day's end and occupied Cherven' 15 kilometers to the northwest (45 kilometers from Minsk) with its forward detachment.

Frontal aviation continued to attack withdrawing enemy columns and assembly areas in the forests and along the roads. A total of 555 aircraft sorties were conducted on 2 July.

Encirclement of the Germans east of Minsk and arrival of front*'s forces in Minsk region*

In accordance with instructions received from Marshal Zhukov, the representative of the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command, the 2d Belorussian Front's Military Council issued an order on the evening of 2 July, which assigned new missions to the armies (having noted the swift advance of the 50th Army and the indecisive operations of the 33d and 49th Armies).

The 33d Army was ordered to force the Berezina River with all of its formations and reach the Zabashevichi and Sloboda line by the end of 3 July.

The 49th Army was ordered to force the Berezina River on the night of 3 July and reach the Sloboda and Pozharishche line (ten kilometers east of Cherven') by the end of the day.

The 50th Army was to continue energetically its pursuit of the enemy. The army's principal mission was to advance along the Cherven'-Minsk highway with its main force grouping concentrated on its right flank and to attack from the march to capture Minsk no later than 5 July in cooperation with the 1st Belorussian Front's 3d Army. The 70th Rifle Corps (the 64th and 199th Rifle Divisions) with reinforcements was transferred from the 49th Army to reinforce the 3d Army.

The pursuit of the enemy to the west continued on 3 July. At the same time, our units on the right flank defeated the German grouping consisting of the remnants of the 110th and 260th Infantry Divisions, the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division, the 321st Combat Group, the 56th and 663d Security Battalions, and the 514th Railroad Battalion. In the center of the *front*, the 49th Army's units also defeated a German grouping consisting of sub-units from the 78th Assault and 18th Panzer Grenadier Divisions.

Having forced the Berezina River along the entire length of the *front*'s sector, the forces advanced 25–40 kilometers on 3 July. The 50th Army's forward detachments reached the eastern and southeastern outskirts of Minsk, which the 3d Belorussian Front forces, assisted by the 1st Belorussian Front, had stormed and occupied on the same day.

Continuing its westward advance, the 33d Army's 157th and 22d Rifle Divisions completed the destruction of the encircled enemy grouping in the forests northeast of Zhukovets during the first half of 3 July. The remnants of the defeated German grouping withdrew to the west in separate groups, leaving behind their heavy equipment and transport. The 62d Rifle Corps had reached the Zabolot'e and Sloboda line by the end of the day and continued its struggle to advance westward. The 49th, 157th, and 22d Rifle Divisions crossed the Berezina River and reached the Belitsa and Zhornovka line. As a result of the destruction of the encircled German grouping northeast of Zhukovets, around 3,000 soldiers and officers were destroyed, and around 100 soldiers belonging to

the 110th and 260th Infantry Divisions, the 78th Assault Division, and the 56th Security Regiment were taken prisoner. More than 1,500 motor vehicles, 17 tanks (including four 'Tigers'), 20 self-propelled guns, 52 multi-tube mortars (six- and nine-tube), 120 guns, and much other military equipment were captured.

Having forced the Berezina River along its entire front, the 49th Army fought to capture Berezino and continued to pursue the enemy, while destroying his isolated groups and covering detachments. Withdrawing to the west, the Germans resisted in small detachments of sub-machinegunners supported by individual tanks and self-propelled guns. The army's formations had advanced 20–35 kilometers by the end of 3 July and, having fulfilled the *front* commander's mission, reached the Dubovruch'e and Derti line.

Aggressively attacking in the direction of Minsk, the 50th Army dislodged and destroyed isolated enemy groups on its path and had advanced up to 45 kilometers by the end of the day. The 38th Rifle Corps' forward detachments reached the eastern and southeastern outskirts of Minsk. Moving along the Minsk Highway, the corps' main forces approached the city with one division advancing to Apchak and another to Smilovichi. Continuing its advance to the northwest, the 19th Corps reached the Domovitskoe, north of Grebenka, and Drachkovo line by the end of 3 July. This severed the withdrawal routes for the remnants of defeated German Fourth Army units to the west and southwest from the forests south of Smolevichi. Advancing to the Cherven' region, the 121st Rifle Corps forced the Berezina River in the morning, and its main forces were approaching this point by the close of the day.

Continuing to pursue the enemy, the *front*'s forces were completing the encirclement of the German Fourth Army grouping south of Smolevichi on 4 July, and were struggling to destroy isolated enemy groups in the forests east of Minsk.

Knocking aside small enemy groups, the 33d Army continued to advance westward, and its 62d Rifle Corps had reached the Mostishche and Mal'tsy line by day's end with its front facing to the south, thus closing off the exit for the encircled German units to the north. Having passed the Sloboda and Dubovruch'e line, the 157th and 222d Rifle Divisions moved steadily westward. Having advanced into the region 5–10 kilometers south of Mal'tsy by the end of the day, the 49th Division continued to move in the direction of Grebenka.

While overcoming untrafficable sectors of swampy and wooded terrain and the resistance of isolated enemy groups, the 49th Army continued its pursuit. Its 69th Corps (the 153d and 42d Rifle Divisions) had reached the Grebenka and Volevachi line by the close of 4 July, and its forward detachment was in the region north of the outskirts of Smilovichi. Marching along the Mogilev-Minsk Highway, the 81st Rifle Corps's 95th Division reached the Cherven' meridian, while the 32d Division (which had just been assigned to the 33d Army) approached Domovitskoe from the south. The 70th Rifle Corps had been re-subordinated to the 50th Army commander. As for the army reserves, the 290th Rifle Division was marching from Bugushevichi to the Lysaia Gora region as of 1600 hours, and the 369th Division was concentrating in the forest south of Cherven' on the morning of 4 July, where it remained.

The 50th Army's formations advanced westward, and part of the forces pursued isolated enemy groups to the north and northwest, thus preventing the German group encircled south of Smolevichi from breaking out to the south and southwest.

While closing the encirclement ring around the German grouping located east of Minsk, the 19th Rifle Corps (consisting of the 362d, 380th, and 324th Rifle Divisions) fought along the Barsuki, Zarubnoe, and Volma line by the end of 4 July with its front facing north. The 38th Corps (the 110th and 385th Rifle Divisions) had concentrated in the region of the southern outskirts of Minsk, Chizhovka, and Bol'shoi Trostianets by the end of the day. The 121st Rifle Corps (the 139th, 238th, and 330th Rifle Divisions) had concentrated in the region northwest and west of Cherven'. The 70th Corps, just transferred from the 49th Army to the 50th Army, had concentrated in the Smilovichi and Dukora region and further west by the end of the day.

As for the *front* reserve, the 307th Rifle Division continued to remain in the Shilovichi region and the 343d Division in the Staraia Vodva region; both divisions were prepared to complete a march to the Pogost region on the night of 5 July.

The 4th Air Army limited its activities to reconnaissance flights and conducted only 25 sorties on 4 July.

The 3d Army was transferred from the 1st Belorussian Front to this *front* at 2400 hours on 4 July.

As a result of the five days of combat operations (30 June–4 July), while pursuing German units, the 2d Belorussian Front advanced in heavy fighting across 150 kilometers of largely untrafficable, wooded and swampy terrain and forced the Drut' and Berezina Rivers. More than 10,000 German soldiers and officers were destroyed and more than 3,000 were taken prisoner during this period, and a large quantity of combat equipment was destroyed and captured. The *front*'s forces closed the encirclement ring around the German Fourth Army grouping and commenced its liquidation. Simultaneously, other of the *front*'s formations utterly defeated opposing enemy forces and were able to develop their advance farther westward.

Belorussian partisan detachments played a significant role in the success of the 2d Belorussian Front's operation to penetrate the defense and pursue the enemy. [The partisan detachments] disrupted lines of communications, held up the transport of enemy reserves, and diverted considerable enemy forces to secure rear installations, routes, and lines of communications. In addition, the *front*'s forces received considerable assistance from the partisans in reconnoitering the enemy, the terrain, and movement routes.

1ST BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S ATTACK IN THE DIRECTION OF MINSK AND SLUTSK

At the same time that the 48th and 65th Armies' units were achieving the complete encirclement of the enemy's XXXV Army Corps and XXXXI Panzer Corps in the Bobruisk region on 27 June, the *front*'s remaining forces continued to pursue energetically the remnants of defeated German forces in two directions: toward Minsk and Slutsk.

The 3d Army advanced in the general direction of Svisloch' and Pukhovichi, with its left boundary line extending from Osipovichi through Shchitkovichi to Shishchitsy (all points inclusive for the 3d Army).

The 65th Army pursued the enemy westward aggressively with its 18th Rifle Corps and had the mission to capture Osipovichi, Daraganovo, and Starye Dorogi, and,

subsequently, develop the offensive toward Slutsk. The army boundary line as of 28 June was established from Chernye Brody through Ustrekhi and Makarichi to Urech'e (all points, except for Chernye Brody, were inclusive for the 65th Army).

The 28th Army advanced in the general direction of Glusk, Liuban', and Pogost.

General Pliev's cavalry-mechanized group advanced rapidly at the junction between the 65th and 28th Armies in the general direction of Urech'e and Slutsk.

The *front* commander strove to exploit fully the operational advantage achieved by his forces west of the Berezina River and by the 3d Army's energetic attack to the northwest against Minsk. He sought to envelop the enemy's Minsk grouping from the south and to encircle it completely in the shortest possible time, together with forces of the 3d and 2d Belorussian Fronts. The 65th and 28th Armies were to continue their westward advance at high tempos and capture Slutsk, thereby depriving the German command of the possibility of organizing a defense on the Minsk-Slutsk line.

Our forces advanced very rapidly. The enemy withdrew in disorder in small groups toward Minsk and Slutsk, barely offering any resistance.

While pursuing the Germans in the general direction of Berezino with the mission to cut the Mogilev-Minsk Highway on 29 June, the 3d Army's right-flank units reached the Borki and Staryi Ostrov line by the end of 28 June. The left-flank forces crossed the Berezina River and captured Svisloch'.

The 65th Army's 18th Rifle Corps penetrated into Osipovichi on this day literally on the heels on the withdrawing enemy and captured the town.

The 28th Army fought along the Glusk and Zabolot'e line.

Completing its movement along two roads (from Bobruisk to Slutsk and from Glusk to Pogost), the cavalry-mechanized group captured Starye Dorogi by 2000 hours on 28 June, and its forward detachments reached the approaches to Slutsk.

The 16th Air Army continuously supported our operations, completing more than 2,000 aircraft sorties on 27 and 28 June. German aviation was not very active: during this period we noted 188 sorties, of which 45 were at night.

Combat along the Minsk axis

While striving to reach the Minsk region and capture the city as quickly as possible, Marshal of the Soviet Union Rokossovsky ordered the 65th Army commander to accelerate the 1st Don Guards Tank Corps' advance to the northwest and to capture the Pukhovichi region. He ordered the 3d Army commander to reinforce the 9th Tank Corps with infantry on motor vehicles, antitank artillery, and mortars, and to advance swiftly in the direction of Pukhovichi and Minsk with the mission of capturing Minsk.

Having set off on the road to Pukhovichi, the 1st Don Guards Tank Corps encountered no enemy resistance, and it had reached the Svisloch' River crossing north of Tsel' by the end of 29 June. However, it encountered strong artillery and mortar fire while attempting to cross the river.

As became clear later, fearing an envelopment of Minsk from the south by our forces, the enemy command dispatched the 12th Panzer Division to the Svisloch' River.

Aviation was quickly sent to assist the tank corps. Our aircraft subjected the German forces to heavy bombardment; they were, however, unable to break the enemy resistance

on this day. The Germans counterattacked many times, forcing our tanks that had crossed to the river's northern bank to withdraw to their initial position.

The tank corps succeeded in penetrating the enemy 12th Panzer Division's defense only on 2 July by means of a strong attack in the center. The tanks rapidly advanced along the highway on the heels of the withdrawing enemy during the second half of the day, reached Pukhovichi, and captured this area, together with the 82d Rifle Division's units (46th Corps), which had arrived here from the east. At the same time that battles were raging along the Minsk axis, General Pliev's cavalry-mechanized group successfully advanced to Slutsk. The 4th Guards Cavalry Corps captured Stolotsy, Gorodzei, and Nesvizh at dawn on 2 July, thus severing the German Minsk group's lines of communication to Baranovichi, Brest, and Luninets.

The offensive developed gradually along the Minsk axis. The 3d Army's 35th Rifle Corps reached the Pogost and Cherven' line on 2 July, where it linked up with units of the 2d Belorussian Front's 49th Army. The remaining forces from the 3d Army continued heavy fighting against enemy forces northeast of Pukhovichi, while advancing slowly toward the Svisloch' River.

The 9th Tank Corps, which the *front* commander had sent to envelop Minsk from the south, captured the road junction at Liubiacha on 2 July and continued to move northward along the Slutsk-Minsk Highway.

Having captured Smolevichi, the 3d Belorussian Front's tank units approached Minsk from the northeast.

Thus, a situation was created which required the mobile formations to penetrate to Minsk from the south as soon as possible, to capture the town, and, together with the 3d Belorussian Front, to complete the encirclement of the enemy's Minsk grouping.

At 1900 hours on 2 July, the *front* commander ordered the tank corps to accelerate its offensive toward Minsk and capture the town on 3 July.

Without halting their pursuit of the enemy, the 1st Guard Don Tank Corps and the 9th Tank Corps continued their northward advance at dawn on 3 July.

Accompanying their tanks, aircraft from the 16th Air Army subjected the southern outskirts of Minsk to heavy bombardment, where, according to intelligence information, the Germans had been preparing to resist.

Destroying small enemy groups on their path, the 1st Don Guards Tank Corps tanks penetrated into Minsk at 1300 hours on 3 July and reached the southeastern outskirts of the city. Exploiting their tanks' success, the 3d Army's units broke the enemy's resistance and, while pursuing him, approached the southeastern outskirts of the city at 1600 hours. As we know from the previous chapter, supported by infantry, the 3d Belorussian Front's tank formations had already penetrated into the city and captured it on the morning of 3 July.

There was no longer any need to employ the 3d Army to destroy the enemy in the city; the army received a new mission on this day.

Therefore, the 3d Army's forces and the 1st Don Guards Tank Corps' tank formations had fulfilled their assigned mission. Aggressively pursuing the enemy to the northwest together with the 3d and 2d Belorussian Fronts' forces, they encircled the large German grouping east of Minsk.

In accordance with orders from the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command, the 3d Army with all of its reinforcements was transferred to the 2d Belorussian Front's control

on 4 July. A new boundary line was established for the 1st Belorussian Front at 2400 hours on 4 July, which extended from Svisloch' through Osipovichi, Belaia Luzha, Gorodzei, and Molchal' to Zel'va.

The battle for Slutsk

While the 3d Army was encircling the enemy's Minsk grouping in cooperation with forces of the 3d and 2d Belorussian Fronts, the *front*'s main forces continued their aggressive offensive toward Slutsk. The 65th Army's main forces advanced toward Shchitkovichi and Shshchitsy, and the 28th Army advanced rapidly toward Liuban' and Pogost. The cavalry-mechanized group pursued the enemy along the Bobruisk-Slutsk Highway between these two armies.

The 65th and 28th Armies' forward detachments reached the Shchitkovichi, Urech'e, and Liuban' line by the end of 29 June, and the detachments from the cavalry-mechanized group were approaching Slutsk.

The enemy offered weak resistance on our flanks and withdrew westward quickly under the attacks of our units. In the center at Slutsk, the German garrison numbered up to two infantry regiments with tanks, which the German command had assembled from withdrawing units of the 35th and 102d Infantry Divisions. [This force] hastily occupied an all-round defense on the approaches to the town and shelled the cavalry's forward detachments with artillery fire.

General Pliev ordered his 30th Cavalry Division to attack the defending enemy from the north and the 9th [Cavalry] Division to attack from the south at first light on 30 June. Units from the 1st Mechanized Corps assisted the offensive from the east.

Under the cover of darkness, the cavalry divisions occupied the jumping-off positions for the attack in dismounted order. The enemy continuously illuminated the terrain with rockets and conducted intensive machine-gun and mortar fire. His aviation also reinforced his actions. Individual German aircraft systematically began to shell roads and bombed the towns of Osipovichi, Starye Dorogi, and Glusk.

After a brief artillery raid, the 4th Guards Cavalry Corps' units attacked the enemy Slutsk garrison at dawn on 30 June. Overcoming strong resistance by German forces, the cavalry divisions penetrated the German defense by a strong attack against the flanks and rushed through to the center of the town. Simultaneously, tanks from the 219th Tank Brigade, which had approached from the east, penetrated into the town. In panic, the German soldiers abandoned their weapons and supplies and began to withdraw to the town, attempting to take shelter in homes. Soon there were stubborn battles on the streets. Up to an enemy infantry regiment, supported by artillery and tank fire, counterattacked our units on the south-western outskirts of the town at 0800 hours. German soldiers, moving forward in dense ranks, penetrated into the town and pressed the 9th Cavalry Division units to the center. An artillery regiment from the 18th Corps' 15th Rifle Division was sent to assist the cavalry. As a result of heavy direct artillery fire, several German tanks were put out of action with the first shots and enemy infantry suffered heavy losses. The German counter-attacks bogged down. Soon the 1st Mechanized Corps' 35th Motorized Rifle Brigade penetrated into the town from the northwest, and units from the 28th Army's 3d Guards Rifle Corps enveloped Slutsk from the south.

Attacked from several directions, the Germans could not withstand the blow, and, leaving a large number of dead and wounded on the battlefield, they began to withdraw westward.

Our forces occupied Slutsk at 1100 hours on 30 June, having completely driven the enemy from the town.

Pursuit of enemy along Baranovichi axis

Having abandoned Slutsk, the remnants of the defeated 35th and 102d Infantry Divisions swiftly withdrew toward Baranovichi, which the enemy had turned into a large strong point.

Isolated groups of German soldiers, a large number of motor vehicles with goods, and animal-drawn transport stretched out along all of the roads leading west.

The *front* commander decided to continue the relentless pursuit of the enemy and capture the city of Baranovichi. To execute this mission, the following orders were given to the forces on the night of 1 July:

- The 1st Mechanized Corps will continue an aggressive pursuit of the withdrawing enemy and will capture the railroad junction and the city of Baranovichi by the end of 3 July;
- The 4th Guards Cavalry Corps will pursue the enemy in the direction of Slutsk, Kopyl', Bobovnia, and Gorodzei, and capture the Stolbtsy, Gorodzei, and Nesvizh region;
- The 65th Army will advance swiftly toward Shishchitsy and Bobovnia, and capture the Uzda, Pesochnoe, Bobovnia, and Kopyl' line by the end of 3 July; and
- The 28th Army will attack through Timkovichi and capture the Kopyl', Timkovichi, and Krasnaia Sloboda line.

To the north, the commander committed the 48th Army (which by this time had completed the liquidation of the enemy's Bobruisk grouping) to combat within a right boundary line extending from Pukhovichi through Rudensk to Dzerzhinsk and within a left boundary extending from Verkaly through Uzda to Stolbtsy. [This army] had the mission of capturing the Rudensk and Shatsk line by the end of 3 July.

Fulfilling the *front* commander's order and aggressively pursuing the withdrawing enemy, the 4th Guards Cavalry Corps captured the large towns of Stolbtsy, Gorodzei, and Nesvizh at dawn on 2 July, covering more than 80 kilometers in its battles. Thus, we had severed the most important lines of communication from Minsk to Baranovichi, Brest, and Luninets.

While overcoming German resistance, the 1st Mechanized Corps advanced very slowly along untrafficable and swampy terrain, reaching the eastern outskirts of Kletsk by the end of 3 July.

Supporting the cavalry and tank advance, the 16th Air Army heavily bombed Baranovichi, making 824 sorties on 1 and 2 July.

Enemy resistance began to intensify on the morning of 3 July. Advancing from the Stolbtsy region, the 30th Cavalry Division was subjected to a strong counterattack by enemy infantry numbering up to a battalion with three 'Tiger' tanks and two self-propelled guns and was forced to shift to the defense. The remaining cavalry divisions also encountered enemy resistance.

The German command hurriedly reinforced its Baranovichi grouping by transferring the 4th Panzer Division to it. The remnants of the 6th, 383d, 45th, 36th, 269th, 35th, and 102d Infantry Divisions were hurriedly regrouped and organized a defense around Baranovichi. Our forces began to be subjected to ever-increasing enemy air attacks.

The *front* commander demanded that his forces accelerate their advance so that they could reach the approaches to Baranovichi by taking advantage of the region captured by the 4th Guards Cavalry Corps.

Despite the very swampy and wooded terrain and the poor roads (especially in the center of the sector and on the right flank), the 48th Army energetically pursued the withdrawing enemy, often covering 30–40 kilometers per day. The army captured the towns of Negoreloe and Uzda on 4 June, and its forward units reached the right bank of the Neman River at Stolbtsy.

To the left, the 65th Army overcame resistance from separate enemy groups, captured Pesochnoe and Bobovnia, and its forward units were approaching Gorodzei and Nesvizh by day's end on 4 July. While pursuing the enemy, the 28th Army forced the Lan' River on 4 July and continued to advance successfully toward Liakhoviche.

Advancing along the Slutsk Highway, the 1st Mechanized Corps captured Siniavka and moved westward, enveloping Baranovichi from the south.

Thus, the 1st Belorussian Front's forces had successfully completed the second mission, which had been assigned to them by the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command, by the end of 4 July. Its right-flank forces had encircled the Germans' Minsk grouping together with the 3d Belorussian Front, while its center and left flank aggressively pursued the withdrawing enemy to the west and reached the approaches to Baranovichi, a large German center of resistance.

CONCLUSIONS ON SECOND STAGE OF OPERATION

The second stage of the operation produced significant operational and strategic results.

In the north, the capture of Polotsk secured our right flank. The subsequent arrival of the 1st Baltic Front at the Drissa, Opsa, Koziany, and Lake Naroch' line opened new missions for it along the Dvina and S'ventsiany axes.

In the center, the concentric offensive by the forces of the three Belorussian *fronts* toward Minsk was an outstanding success.

The large German grouping withdrawing along the Mogilev-Minsk axis was soon in a difficult situation.

The towns of Vileika and Krasnoe had already been occupied on 2 July as a result of an aggressive attack by the 3d Belorussian Front's mobile formations northwest of Minsk. Our forces cut the German communications routes from Minsk to Vilnius and Lida during the attack. At the same time, the rapid offensive by the 1st Belorussian Front's cavalry-mechanized group southwest of Minsk captured the towns and communications centers of Stolbtsy, Gorodzei, and Nesvizh, thus cutting off the Germans' lines of communication to Baranovichi, Brest, and Luninets. Thus, the operational encirclement of the entire German Minsk grouping had already come to fruition on 2 July.

This encirclement was completed on the following day, on 3 July, when the 3d Belorussian Front, assisted by the 1st Belorussian Front, captured Minsk, the capital of the Belorussian SSR and the Germans' most important defensive center on the western axis, by storm in a concentric offensive and enveloping maneuver. On this day the spearheads of our two advancing wedges met in the Minsk region, the 3d Belorussian Front from the northeast and the 1st Belorussian Front from the southeast. The encirclement ring around German forces was closed at Minsk.

The forces of the German Fourth Army's XXII and XXVII Army and XXXIX Panzer Corps and the remnants of the XXXV Army Corps and German Ninth Army's XXXXI Panzer Corps, as well as other units, which altogether numbered about 100,000 men, were cut off to the east of Minsk in an extensive wooded and swampy terrain belt in the direction of Volma, Pekalin, and further toward the Berezina River. These mixed forces, located at first in several groups, made desperate attempts to break out of encirclement in various directions. For its part, the Red Army command undertook measures to liquidate these large, isolated enemy forces as quickly as possible. Operations by our forces to destroy the enemy in the Minsk pocket continued beyond 4 July.

The utter defeat of the Germans' Minsk grouping (crowning the defeat of the Vitebsk and Bobruisk groupings) created exceptionally favorable conditions for a further westward advance by the main Soviet forces. A large breach had been punched in the enemy's strategic front; 30 enemy divisions had been destroyed or cut off and were now in the Minsk pocket awaiting their fate. Attempts by the German command to close this breach using separate divisions swiftly transferred from different axes did not produce significant results.

Thus, the second main stage of the operation was executed skillfully: the enemy was defeated in the center, Minsk was captured, and the large German grouping east of Minsk was cut off.

The Red Army in Belorussia was now assigned the mission of relentlessly pursuing the remnants of the defeated enemy; brilliant prospects for further rapid successes were opened along the axes toward Vilnius, Lida, and Baranovichi.

5
Liquidation of Encircled German Forces at Minsk

Offensive Against Dvinsk and Westward Pursuit of Enemy (Third Stage of the Operation, 5–16 July)

Specially assigned forces carried out the liquidation of the encircled German grouping in the region east and south of Minsk during the period being examined.

The main forces of our four *fronts* continued to pursue the remnants of German units westward at this time. An enormous breach had been formed along the most important strategic axis in the center of the entire German front as a result of the defeat of three armies, which had occurred during the two stages of the Belorussian operation. It was necessary to take advantage of this situation swiftly and to deny the enemy the possibility of re-establishing a front at one of the intermediate positions.

The enemy attempted to halt the 1st Baltic Front's advance along the Dvinsk axis by stubborn fighting using reserves which had been dispatched forward and the belt of lake terrain south and southeast of Dvinsk (Daugavpils), which was most suitable for defense. Our offensive along the Vilnius, Grodno, Volkovysk, Baranovichi-Brest, and Pinsk axes developed successfully at rapid tempos during the period from 5–16 July.

LIQUIDATION OF ENCIRCLED GERMAN FORCES EAST AND SOUTH OF MINSK

As a result of the rapid advance by forces of the 3d and 1st Belorussian Fronts and the occupation of Minsk on 3 July, the withdrawal routes for the German Fourth Army's main forces had been cut off. Displaced to the west along the Mogilev-Minsk axis under constant attack by the 2d Belorussian Front, the remnants of this army had gathered into two groups in the forests east of Minsk by 5 July. One group, consisting primarily of the XII Army Corps' units, was located in the region northeast of Volma; the second, whose nucleus consisted of the XXVII Army Corps' divisions, had crowded together southeast of Volma. In addition, information from prisoners established the presence of units from the XXXIX Panzer, XXXXI Panzer, and XXXV Army Corps in this region.

Altogether, the remnants of 18 infantry, three panzer grenadier, two antiaircraft, one panzer, one assault, and one security division, and a large number of various separate specialized units and sub-units, which had been part of German Army Group Center and numbered around 100,000 men with considerable equipment, had lost all control, were

becoming mixed up with one another, and vainly rushed along the forest roads and paths in search of a way out of the Minsk pocket.

The encircled grouping had no communications with its command until 4 July. It succeeded in establishing radio communications with the Fourth Army's headquarters, which had managed to slip through to the west, on 5 July. The encircled enemy forces received the order to break out and link up with their units. German aircraft dropped food and ammunition to the cutoff grouping on the night of 5 July.

The Germans divided their units into two groups in order to break out of the encirclement. The first, headed by Lieutenant-General Traut, the 78th Assault Division commander, was to break out to the south, in the direction of Smilovichi and Rudensk. The second, headed by Lieutenant-General Mueller, the XII Army Corps commander and the deputy commander of the Fourth Army, had the mission of breaking out in an envelopment of Minsk from the south toward Dzerzhinsk and further to the southwest. Both groups had the common goal of reaching Baranovichi.

In the meantime, while continuing to develop an aggressive offensive westward, the 2d Belorussian Front's forces pressed the encircled enemy with ever-increasing intensity, dismembering them into small isolated groups and destroying them.

The 33d Army, which had been transferred to the 3d Belorussian Front at 2400 hours on 5 July with the mission of concentrating in the Minsk region, advanced with its right-flank divisions south of the Moscow-Minsk Highway. Attacking around the massive forests from the north, it blocked the enemy's withdrawal routes to the northwest. Meanwhile, the army's center and left flank compressed the enemy grouping in the Volma and Pekalin region.

Advancing with the main forces south of Minsk, part of the formations of the 2d Belorussian Front's 49th and 50th Armies liquidated German attempts to break out to the south and southwest. The advanced detachment of Traut's group, numbering up to 3,000 men, attempted to break out across the Mogilev-Minsk Highway in the Smilovichi region on 6 July, but encountered the 49th Army's units. After a four-hour battle, the detachment was utterly crushed.

The enemy attempted to break out from the Apchak region toward the Svisloch' River crossings at Sinelo on the same day, but was attacked by the 49th Army's 369th and 222d Rifle Divisions and the 342d Heavy Self-propelled Artillery Regiment. The Germans lost more than 3,500 soldiers and officers, including 1,200 taken prisoner as a result of the fighting. Traut himself, the commander of the 78th Assault Division, was captured, as were the XXII Army Corps' artillery commander and the chief of the reconnaissance department of that corps' staff.

Mueller's group attempted to break out in an envelopment of Minsk from the south from the Bol'shoi Trostenets and El'nitsa region on the same day. However, it was thrown back with heavy losses by units from the 31st Army's 113th Rifle Corps, which had promptly advanced from the southeast and south of Minsk. One of this group's units (numbering up to 800 men) managed to reach Samokhvalovichi and the vilage of Ozero, but here it encountered the 50th Army's headquarters. It was destroyed by the forces of an army mobile detachment after a short battle. The second unit (up to 1,000 men) slipped through to Dobrynevo, but was destroyed there the next day.

The 50th Army's 38th Rifle Corps withdrew to the Ptich' River's western bank and occupied the Tomashevichi, Samokhvalovichi, and Podgai line with its front facing to the east in order to block the enemy's withdrawal route to the southwest.

The 33d Army destroyed up to 1,000 men south of Pekalin during the fighting on 6 July, while operating along forest roads in the Pekalin and Volma region.

The 2d Belorussian Front's 49th and 50th Armies continued to advance westward with their main forces on 7 July, while detaching five divisions to liquidate the enemy's Minsk grouping. Accordingly, the 324th, 369th, and 380th Rifle Divisions were detached from the 49th Army, and the 50th Army's 38th Rifle Corps (the 110th and 385th Rifle Divisions) remained along the Ptich' River.

The fiercest battles on this day took place at the Svisloch' River crossings. Breaking out to the southwest, the enemy captured crossings at Sinelo at dawn and cut the 49th Army's communications road. Part of the German forces crossed the Svisloch' River in the Mikhanovichi region and began to spread out to the south. However, the 49th Army's 369th Rifle Division (which had approached from the southeast) and the 33d Army's 222d Rifle Division (which had approached from the north) defeated the enemy at the crossings and cleared the enemy groups out of Mikhanovichi and Borki. Thereafter, the 222d Rifle Division, operating with mobile detachments mounted on motor vehicles together with units of the 38th Rifle Corps, encircled and destroyed a German group numbering 5,000 men that had managed to cross the river in the Kaikovo region. Units from the 49th Army's 69th Rifle Corps defeated on the same day yet another enemy group, which was on the march in the Maksimilovo region. Major-General Trowitz, the commander of the 56th Infantry Division *(sic)*, was among the prisoners captured this day by 49th Army units.

Units from the 50th Army liquidated the enemy group that had infiltrated the previous day to the Dobrynevo region; up to 2,000 Germans were destroyed and 1,400 taken prisoner on 7 July.

The destruction of enemy groups that had attempted to break out to the south and southwest continued on 8 July.

The 369th Rifle Division encircled and completely liquidated a large German group in the forest south of Dukorshchina, destroying more than 1,500 men, 120 motor vehicles, and ten guns in the fighting. In addition to the staff, Major-General Steinkeller, the commander of the German 60th Panzer Grenadier ['Feldhernhalle'] Division, was taken prisoner, and 325 motor vehicles and 90 horses were captured.

Having concentrated in the Babovozovshchina region, the 280th Rifle Division fought intensely against a large enemy group that was attempting to break out of the Gatovo region to Samokhvalovichi. At first the Germans succeeded in breaking out and capturing Samokhvalovichi. But after a stubborn battle the enemy was defeated and thrown back to the northeast. The 380th Rifle Division, cooperating with other units, destroyed up to 15,000 Germans and took 3,500 men prisoner, along with a large quantity of arms and other military equipment during 4–8 July (but mainly on 8 July).

The 38th Rifle Corps' units continued to clear out enemy groups that had penetrated into the forests south and southwest of Samokhvalovichi during the day.

Simultaneous with desperate attempts to break out to the south and southwest, the Germans tried to move north across the 33d Army's operational sector.

The remnants of the 14th, 31st, and 267th Infantry Divisions and the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division, which had assembled in the forests south of Smolevichi, began to move toward the Moscow-Minsk Highway west of Smolevichi on the night of 8 July.

By this time, the 33d Army's main forces were still completing their concentration in the Minsk region.

Taking advantage of this circumstance, the enemy used two groups to cut across the highway in the Dinarovki and Koroleva Stana region, and began to spread out to the north. A German advance northward would threaten the 3d Belorussian Front headquarters, which was located in Logoisk. The 3d Belorussian Front's 2d Guards Motorcycle Regiment and a battalion from the 152d Fortified Region, which were in the *front* commander's reserve, were sent to liquidate the grouping which had broken through.

These units, with assistance from detachments of the 'For Soviet Belorussia' Partisan Brigade and the 33d Army's 70th Rifle Division, encircled the German grouping in the Trubchino region and destroyed it on 8 July. The second enemy group had reached the Mit'kovshchina region and was encircled and destroyed there on 9 July.

Having lost all hope for an organized withdrawal from the encirclement, and having suffered enormous losses from attacks by our aviation, which had detected enemy columns on the forest roads in a timely fashion, the enemy attempted to filter through in small, isolated groups. However, he encountered our units everywhere and was destroyed.

Thus, a German group numbering 3,000 men, including Lieutenant-General Mueller (the XII Army Corps Commander), who was temporarily filling the role of German Fourth Army commander, infiltrated into the region southwest of Dzerzhinsk on 8 July, but encountered units of the 50th Army's 121st Rifle Corps. After a brief battle during which Mueller and his group were taken prisoner, Mueller ordered the remnants of the entire Fourth Army to surrender. The liquidation of separate, isolated German groups continued until 11 July.

The 2d Belorussian Front commander assigned this mission to the 49th Army commander from 9 July. [To fulfill this mission] the *front* commander assigned the 50th Army's 38th Rifle Corps, the 324th, 369th, and 380th Rifle Divisions, which had formerly been part of the 49th Army, and the 343d Division, which was in the *front* reserve in the Cherven' region, to the 49th Army commander.

The 49th Army's units combed the large forests and cleared them of Germans while operating along the Uzliany and Rudensk axes southeast of Minsk.

The 38th Rifle Corps' units captured a German group numbering 2,000 men in the Uzliany region on 9 July, including Infantry General Volckers, the XXVII Army Corps commander) and Major-General Klammt, the 260th Infantry Division commander. The 324th Rifle Division liquidated a large enemy group in the Bol'shoi Trostenets and Apchak region on the same day, capturing 1,200 German soldiers and officers, including Major-General Engel, the 45th Infantry Division's commander.

The 49th Army had completely fulfilled its mission by 11 July and began to advance westward, following the 2d Belorussian Front's main forces. Simultaneously, having already begun to advance its main forces west of Minsk on 8 July, the 33d Army used units from the 49th, 32d, and 70th Rifle Divisions to comb the forests east of the town up

to the Smolevichi, Drachkovo, and Motorovo line. Operating in separate detachments, the 33d Army's units had completely cleared this region by 10 July.

Thus, the entire German force grouping remaining east and southeast of Minsk was completely liquidated during the period 5–11 July.

The 49th Army alone destroyed up to 36,000 Germans, 950 guns and mortars, 145 tanks and self-propelled guns, and more than 1,500 motor vehicles during the period 6–11 July. A total of 16,000 German soldiers and officers were taken prisoner, including five generals, and 550 guns and mortars, 900 motor vehicles, and 2,000 horses were captured.

In all, the 2d Belorussian Front's forces destroyed 52,000 Germans and captured 28,243 during the period 3–12 July. Among those captured were three corps commanders and six division commanders. In addition, the 33d Army destroyed up to 20,500 enemy soldiers and officers and captured another 7,500.

1ST BALTIC FRONT'S COMBAT OPERATIONS ON APPROACHES TO DVINSK AND EXPLOITATION OF SUCCESS ALONG S'VENTSIANY-KAUNAS AXIS

The 1st Baltic Front successfully resolved the missions assigned to it by the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command during the period 23 June–4 July. The defeat of the enemy's immediate operational reserves and the deep penetration of the 1st Baltic Front into his defense created favorable conditions for developing the offensive along the Ponevezhis-Shauliai and S'ventsiany-Kaunas axes.

To take full advantage of the results of the victory achieved and the arrival of our forces at the Shauliai and Kaunas line, on 4 July the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command assigned the following mission to the 1st Baltic Front (which consisted of the 6th Guards, 43d, 39th, 2d Guards, and 51st Armies, and the 1st Tank Corps):

> Develop the offensive, while delivering the main attack against S'ventsiany and Kaunas. The immediate mission is to capture the Dvinsk, Nove-S'ventsiany, and Podbrodze line no later than 10–12 July. Subsequently, while firmly protecting yourself from the north, advance toward Kaunas and use part of the forces to advance toward Ponevezhis and Shauliai.

The boundary line between the 1st Baltic Front and the 3d Belorussian Front was established on 4 July along the Paraf' ianov, Miazdel, Podbrodze, Koshedary, and Mariampol' line. The boundary line with the 2d Baltic Front was established along the Western Dvina River.

Of the five armies which were earmarked to accomplish the missions assigned by the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command, only two (the 6th Guards and 43d) were in direct contact with the enemy by the end of 4 July. After liquidating the Vitebsk grouping, the forces of the 39th Army (which had entered the *front*'s composition on 3 July) were on the march, and its formations were located as follows by the end of 4 July. The 84th Rifle Corps was in the Berezino, Gorodok, and Osetishche region, and the 5th Guards Rifle

Corps was in the Kal'nik, Domzheritsy, and Zaboen'e region. Taking into account the rapid tempos of advance of the 43d Army's forces, it was necessary to use four to five days to bring the 39th Army's formations forward and commit them to battle.

The 2d Guards Army was on the march 50–70 kilometers east of Vitebsk by the end of 4 July. The 51st Army's formations were only just beginning to arrive at Dretun Station. Ten to twelve days were needed to unload and bring the 2d Guards and 51st Armies forward.

Thus, the forces of three armies (the 6th Guards, 43d, and 39th) could fulfill the *front*'s immediate mission (the arrival of forces at the Dvinsk, Nove-S'ventsiany, and Podbrodze line), which the *Stavka* directive indicated was to a depth of 40–70 kilometers. The *front* intended to enlist the services of all five armies to fulfill the subsequent mission (the development of the offensive to Kaunas and Ponevezhis).

The combat operations of the 1st Baltic Front along the two axes (Dvinsk and S'ventsiany-Kaunas) during the period 5–15 July 1944 are examined below. The 6th Guards, 43d, and 39th Armies participated in this stage of the operation. During this period, the 2d Guards and 51st Armies, which had just become part of the *front* composition, were completing their march behind the combat formations of the operating armies.

Combat along Dvinsk axis

The arrival of our forces from the inter-lake defiles north of Braslav and Rymshany, and the clearing out of the enemy from the Western Dvina's southern bank on the Kraslava and Dvinsk front, were particularly significant for the successful development of the offensive. The resolution of this mission was assigned to the 6th Guards Army, and after the capture of Polotsk, the 6th Guards Army left its 22d Guards Rifle Corps to do so.

The 6th Guards Army's operational sector had widened considerably by the end of 5 July as a result of the successful offensive to the west by the 2d Guards and 103d Rifle Corps and the battles underway to capture Polotsk. By this time the army's front-line extended almost 160 kilometers. The army's right flank was located near Rubanova (nine kilometers east of Disna), and the left flank was at Lake Boginskoe. Units and formations were operating on extensive fronts and had considerable gaps between them. Thus, for example, there was an almost 40-kilometer gap between the advancing 103d and 2d Guards Rifle Corps by the end of 5 July, which was only partially secured by the 1st Tank Corps' units.

Of the twelve divisions which made up the 6th Guards Army by the end of 5 July, only five were involved in the offensive: two rifle divisions (the 29th and 154th) from the 103d Rifle Corps, and three (the 166th, 46th Guards, and 9th Guards) from the 2d Guards Rifle Corps. Two rifle divisions (the 71st Guards and 270th) protected the army's right flank on the front from Rubanova to Viata (a distance of 65 kilometers). The five divisions from the 22d and 23d Guards Rifle Corps were brought up to the Dvinsk axis after completion of their battles to seize Polotsk.

Attaching great significance to the Dvinsk axis, the German command attempted to prevent our forces from reaching Dvinsk at all cost, thus protecting the withdrawal of Army Group North, which had already commenced. The enemy hurriedly transferred the 132d, 81st, 215th, and 263d Infantry Divisions and the 388th Field Training Division (all

from Army Group North) and also the 226th Assault Gun Brigade to this axis. While intensively clearing up its rear areas, the German command also brought forward four separate regiments (including three Latvian SS regiments) and up to seven security, sapper, and penal battalions. In addition, the 61st and 225th Infantry Divisions and a number of other units were transferred to the Dvinsk axis from the withdrawing Army Group North.

Thus, the 6th Guards Army was faced with rather complex missions: to overcome the German defense created in numerous inter-lake defiles and on wooded-swampy terrain, and to reach Dvinsk before the enemy could bring up new operational reserves.

Attaching great importance to the capture of the inter-lake defiles northeast of Braslav and also to a swift arrival at Dvinsk, the *front* command decided to employ the 1st Tank Corps for this purpose. The *front* commander assigned the corps the following mission on 3 July:

> Secure the Druia region at first light on 4 July by means of a swift attack by one tank brigade in the direction of Pshebrodze and Druia, and capture the Dvinsk region by the end of 4 July by a decisive attack to the northwest by the corps' main forces.

The 1st Tank Corps began to carry out this mission only at 2000 hours on 4 July. The corps' units had reached the Lake Ukla and Drys'viaty line on 5 July. All attempts to advance northward were unsuccessful because the tank units encountered strong enemy fire resistance and demolished bridges in their path. Consequently, the subsequent advance of the tank corps was halted. The corps' units had concentrated in the Ovsianka, Akhremovtse, and Podoby region by the end of 5 July to repair their tank equipment and to prepare for subsequent operations against Utena and Zarasai.

The situation that existed by the end of 5 July urgently required the seizure of the inter-lake defiles (southeast of Dvinsk) before the arrival of the 22d and 23d Guards Rifle Corps. The successful resolution of this mission would create favorable conditions for the arrival of the 6th Guards Army at the Western Dvina River in the Dvinsk region. Consequently, the command decided to continue the offensive on 5 July with the 103d Rifle Corps along the Western Dvina's southern bank to reach the Shakeli-Barabie and Lake Volos line by the close of 6 July. To carry out this mission, the 9th Guards Division from the 2d Guards Rifle Corps reinforced the corps.

The 103d Rifle Corps launched its attack on the morning of 6 July. Overcoming strong enemy resistance, the corps' units advanced 10–18 kilometers and reached the Zalozhie, Smul'ki, and Sutorovshchizna line by day's end.

Because of considerable irregularities in fuel deliveries, our aviation's activity was reduced from 5 July. Thus, for example, the 3d Air Army conducted a total of only 103 aircraft sorties on 6 July. Enemy aviation, however, began to operate more actively. It conducted as many as 250 sorties on this day.

Newly received information concerning the enemy confirmed existing data that he was bringing reserves forward and striving to close tightly all of the inter-lake defiles. The *front* commander assigned the following mission to the 6th Guards Army on 6 July:

> The 103d Rifle Corps' units are to reach the front from Kraslava through Lake Pliussy to the northeastern bank of Lake Snudy by the end of the day on 7 July, and its forward units are to capture Kaplava and Dubinovo.

The 2d Guards Rifle Corps was assigned the mission to attack in the direction of Lake Obole and establish communications with units on the 43d Army's right flank.

The 103d Rifle Corps' forces renewed their attack on the morning of 7 July. However, German resistance increased considerably on this day. The enemy succeeded in concentrating all of the 132d Infantry Division, two separate battalions, and the 226th Assault Gun Brigade in this region. Overcoming fierce German resistance, the corps' units were able to advance only from two to eight kilometers in two days (7 and 8 July). As a result of the 103d Rifle Corps' slow advance, it had already become clear by the close of 7 July that the achievement of success along this axis was doubtful. The situation required that a new axis be chosen and that larger forces be allocated to carry out the assigned missions.

A decision was made on 7 July to shift the main attack axis west of Lake Snudy in the general direction of Borovka. The 6th Guards Army partially regrouped its forces during 8 July and the first half of the 9th. Two of the 103d Rifle Corps' rifle divisions (the 9th Guards and 29th) were assigned to the line extending from the southern bank of Lake Strusto through Usiany to Dauble, and the 22d Guards Rifle Corps was brought up from the depths [rear area].

The planned force regrouping was completed by mid-day on 9 July. Following a brief artillery preparation, the units of the 103d and 22d Guards Rifle Corps (forces from the 9th Guards, 51st Guards, and 47th Guards Rifle Divisions) shifted to the attack at 1300 hours. However, advancing units encountered strong enemy resistance along this axis too and advanced quite slowly. Extensively exploiting the inter-lake defiles for defense, the enemy stubbornly resisted our advancing units, using fire and counterattacks by forces in infantry battalion up to regimental strength, with powerful artillery, tank, and aviation support.

The 9th Guards Rifle Division succeeded in advancing up to 14 kilometers and reached a line extending from the northern bank of Lake Snudy through Raugishki to Kukianishki during the three days of its attack. The 22d Guards Rifle Corps (attacking with two divisions on the left) advanced two-five kilometers and reached the Kruki and Karasino line during the same period. All efforts aimed at developing the offensive northwest toward Borovka were unsuccessful.

Attacking between Lake Drys'viaty and Lake Dzisna in the general direction of Smolvy, the 2d Guards Rifle Corps advanced almost 25 kilometers in six days (6–11 July) and reached the line of the Dvinsk Railroad and Rymshany by the end of 11 July.

The 6th Guards Army command decided on 11 July to exploit the 2d Guards Rifle Corps' success in the general direction of Zarasai by employing the approaching 23d Guards Corps (by this time each corps had two rifle divisions). The 2d and 23d Guards Rifle Corps received the mission to reach the Lake Medumu-esers, Ossa, and Dusiaty line. While repelling fierce enemy counterattacks, the 23d Guards Rifle Corps, which had been committed to battle on the night of 13 July, had advanced only four-five kilometers by the end of 15 July and had captured the large town of Smolvy. By this time, the 2d

Guards Rifle Corps had advanced to the Lake Shvinta, and Lodzhai line. All attempts to develop a further offensive along the Zarasai axis were fruitless.

Simultaneously with the offensive on the Zarasai axis, attempts were made to widen the salient west of Lake Snudy, which had been formed during combat on 9–11 July, by committing to battle the second echelons of the 22d Guards and 103d Rifle Corps (the 90th Guards and 29th Rifle Divisions). The 29th Rifle Division (of the 103d Rifle Corps) was committed to combat on 12 July, and the 90th Guards Rifle Division (of the 23d Guards Rifle Corps) was introduced on the Borovka axis on 13 July. [Finally], the 46th Motorized Rifle Brigade, which had been transferred to the 22d Guards Rifle Corps because of the increased enemy activity, was committed to battle in the direction of Zhvirble on 14 July. In intense combat, all of these simultaneously committed formations only slightly (two-three kilometers) widened the wedge west of Lake Snudy.

Because of the irregularities in fuel delivery, the 3d Air Army's aircraft were unable to render substantive assistance to the ground forces during the fierce battles of 13–15 July. Thus, for example, only 13 aircraft sorties were conducted on 13 July; 71 on 14 July; and 151 on 15 July. Enemy aviation conducted an average of 36–66 sorties per day during this period.

Attempting to halt our offensive on the approaches to Dvinsk at all cost, the enemy was able to exploit the numerous natural obstacles quickly, and he created a rather strong field defense during these defensive battles. Simultaneously, as before, the German command continued to reinforce the Dvinsk axis feverishly. Thus, for example, in addition to the forces already in action, he committed three infantry divisions (the 215th, 81st, and 388th Training), two Latvian regiments (the 3d and 5th), the 226th Assault Brigade, and a number of other units and sub-units against the units of the 103d and 22d Guards Rifle Corps. Likewise, the enemy also committed considerable forces against the 23d and 2d Guards Rifle Corps.

Thus, the 6th Guards Army was unable to reach the Dvinsk region during these ten days of intense battles in difficult terrain conditions and as a result of the rapid influx of enemy reserves. Newly arrived 6th Guards Army reserves (with the exception of the 71st Guards Rifle Division) were used up during these battles.

In addition, it should be noted that the attack in the direction of Borovka and the subsequent offensive against Zarasai began with inadequate forces. The necessary superiority in forces over the enemy was not created along either of these axes. The 22d Guards and 103d Rifle Corps' second echelons (as already noted above) were committed unit by unit and with considerable delay. The attack by the 23d and 2d Guards Rifle Corps on the Zarasai axis was also conducted with weak forces. There were not adequate forces in these corps' combat formations or in the army reserve to exploit success. Moreover, the course of combat operations demonstrated that, if the 22d and 103d Rifle Corps' second echelons had promptly exploited the 9th Guards Rifle Division's success on 9 and 10 July, the results would have been quite different.

Combat along the Dvinsk axis took on a protracted nature from 15 July onwards. In accordance with a decision by the *front* commander, the salient formed during the offensive west of Lake Snudy was cleared out on 18 July. The 6th Guards Army's forces began to regroup and prepare for subsequent offensive operations along the Dvinsk axis.

Exploitation of success along S'ventsiany-Kaunas axis

The forces of the 43d Army continued to develop the offensive along the S'ventsiany axis, while operating on the 1st Baltic Front's left flank.

Conducting a successful offensive, the 43d Army advanced 25–40 kilo-meters on 5–6 July, and reached the Vidze, Triburtse, Loz'dzinele, Komai, and Grodzkovshchizna front by the close of 6 July. The army received the mission on 7 July 'to defeat the opposing enemy, capture S'ventsiany, cut the Dvinsk-Vilnius railroad line, and reach the Lake Dzisnishche, Baltanishki, S'ventsiany, and Rudnia line by the end of the day.' Carrying out the *front* commander's order, the army's forces succeeded in advancing 20–25 kilometers on 7 July and captured the large highway junction, town, and railroad station of S'ventsiany.

The 39th Army, which had been transferred from the 3d Belorussian Front to the 1st Baltic Front, was marching behind the 43d Army's left flank during this period. The 39th Army's corps had concentrated in the Postavy, Kobyl'nik, and Zane region by the end of 7 July.

The forces on the 43d Army's left flank continued to develop the offensive during 8 July. The 92d Rifle Corps was approaching Lyngmiany. After capturing Nove-S'ventsiany, the 1st Rifle Corps' right flank was approaching Koltyniany, and its left flank was fighting on the Zheimiana River.

The rapid advance of the 43d Army's right flank and the arrival of the 60th Rifle Corps' units north of Lake Dzisna increased the gap between the 6th Guards Army's left flank and the 43d Army's right flank even more. Thus, the gap between the armies had already increased to up to 40 kilometers by the close of 7 July. In this situation, the liquidation of separate enemy groups in Vidze and the securing of the 43d Army's right flank became particularly important.

The 46th Guards Rifle Division (of the 6th Guards Army) successfully executed the mission of closing the gap between the two armies. Its units had already reached the eastern bank of Lake Dzisna by the end of 9 July. Units of the 1st Tank Corps carried out the destruction of the separate enemy groups in the Vidze region and to the north during 8 and 9 July. It should be mentioned that the involvement of the 1st Tank Corps' units in protracted battles against the enemy was disadvantageous, since this diverted them from carrying out more important missions (like reaching the Utena region and then Zarasai). This circumstance forced the *front* commander to order the 1st Tank Corps commander 'to bypass Vidze from the south and, while forcing the advance to the maximum, to reach your axis and carry out the assigned mission'.

The tank corps' units were not able to break contact with the enemy and carry out the enveloping maneuver south of Vidze on 8 July. The *front* commander on 9 July once again demanded that the tank corps commander 'cease fighting the enemy in the Vidze region, bypass Vidze from the south, accelerate the corps' movement to its axis, and fulfill the assigned mission.' Despite such a categorical demand from the *front* commander, the 1st Tank Corps' units continued to make no headway and kept fighting the enemy north of Vidze. Only after liquidating the enemy remnants in this region did they begin to move northwest.

The 43d Army continued to advance in the direction of Utena on 9 July, repelling occasional enemy infantry and tank counterattacks. Having completed its march behind the 43d Army's left flank, the forward units of the 39th Army forced the Zheimiana River on 9 July on a front extending from Nove-S'ventsiany to Podbrodze. The 39th Army's main forces were committed to battle on 10 July in the general direction of Ukmerge.

Enemy resistance increased considerably west of the Dvinsk-Vilnius railroad line. No matter what, the German command attempted to delay the swiftly developing offensive by the 1st Baltic Front's left-flank forces on the approaches to Onikshty and Ukmerge. The 225th Infantry Division, units of the 205th Infantry Division, the 604th Security Regiment, the 277th Assault Gun Brigade, and a number of other enemy units and subunits had already been committed against the 1st Baltic Front's left flank by 10 July, in addition to those enemy formations and units which were already operating in this region.

Repelling counterattacks and increased enemy fire resistance, the 43d and 39th Armies continued their westward advance. The forces managed to cover 50–80 kilometers in six days, and they had reached the Rudakishki, Voiskuny, Liagi, Onikshty, Ovanty, Shesholi, Gumbeli, and Keizhany line by the end of 14 July. All efforts to push the tank corps forward from the Daugailiai region toward Zarasai (during the period 10–14 July) were unsuccessful. The corps' units were withdrawn from battle on 15 July to repair and refit the tank corps and to prepare it for the forthcoming Ponevezhis-Shauliai operation.

While completing its march, the 2d Guards Army covered around 300 kilometers in 11 days and concentrated in the Khodutsishki, Komai region and east of Miadzel by the end of 14 July.

The arrival at Dretun' Station of the trains carrying the 51st Army's forces was delayed. Essentially, only a portion of the army's forces (four divisions) began to march in the general direction of Vidze on 8–9 July. Four of the 51st Army's divisions had reached the Opsa and Lake Boginskoe line by the end of 14 July, and four divisions were marching from Disna to Germanoviche.

As indicated above, the 4 July *Stavka* directive to the 1st Baltic Front assigned the immediate mission 'to capture the Dvinsk, Nove-S'ventsiany, and Podbrodze line no later than 10–12 July.' During the offensive the 1st Baltic Front's left flank had already reached the Utena, Nove-S'ventsiany, and Podbrodze line by 9 July. Because of sharply increased enemy resistance, the *front*'s right-flank forces (the 6th Guards Army) were unable to reach Dvinsk.

The *front*'s forces advanced 40–50 kilometers on the right flank and 100–140 kilometers on the left during the ten days 5–14 July. As a result of the successful operations by the 1st Baltic Front's left flank, favorable conditions were created for a further offensive toward Ponevezhis and further to Shauliai.

The *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command narrowed the *front*'s sector by more than 120 kilometers on 14 July in order to concentrate the 1st Baltic Front's main efforts on the Ponevezhis-Shauliai axis. The left boundary line between the 1st Baltic and 3d Belorussian Fronts was established as of 15 July up to the town of Paraf'ianov, as before, and further along a line extending from Komai through Lake Kretony and Vidzishki to the mouth of the Neman River. The 39th Army, which was advancing on the *front*'s left flank, together with all of its reinforcements, was once again transferred to the 3d Belorussian Front at 2400 hours on 15 July.

3D BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S OFFENSIVE ALONG VILNIUS AND LIDA AXES: CAPTURE OF VILNIUS, AND ARRIVAL AT THE NEMAN RIVER

Development of 3d Belorussian Front's offensive along the Vilnius and Lida axes

The 3d Belorussian Front received a new directive from the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command (No. 220126) on 4 July, which ordered it to develop the offensive, while delivering its main attack in the general direction of Molodechno and Vilnius. The *front*'s immediate mission was to capture Vilnius and Lida no later than 10–12 July, and, subsequently, reach the Neman River, and capture a bridgehead on the western bank. In addition, by order of the *Stavka,* the 33d Army, which consisted of seven rifle divisions with two corps headquarters (the 62d and 19th Rifle Corps), was transferred from the 2d Belorussian Front to the 3d Belorussian Front as of 2400 hours on 5 July.

In implementing the *Stavka* directive, on the same day the *front* commander ordered the 5th Guards Tank Army and the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps to consider the Vilnius axis to be the main one. Accordingly, the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps was to continue its advance on the morning of 5 July in the general direction of Shumsk and Vilnius. It was to capture the Vorniany, Shumsk, and Gudogai region by the end of the day, and it had the mission of attacking Vilnius from the north and northeast on the morning of 6 July, together with the 5th Guards Tank Army.

The 5th Guards Tank Army was required to advance in the direction of Volozhin and Vilnius on the morning of 5 July, and to capture the Oshmiany, Klevitsa, and Gol'shany region by the end of the day. It was to attack Vilnius from the south and southeast by the end of 6 July in cooperation with the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps.

General Krylov's 5th Army received the mission to continue its energetic advance also in the direction of Vilnius and to capture the line extending from (but excluding) Konstantinov through Svir' and Zhodishki to Smorgon' by the end of 5 July. It was to seize the (excluding) Petrashsishki (18 kilometers northwest of Konstantinov), Mikhalishki, Gerviaty, and Soly line by the close of 6 July.

Since it was the principal one, the Lida axis was designated for the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps and the 31st Army. The 3d Guards Cavalry Corps was to advance along the Molodechno-Lida rail line on the morning of 5 July and capture the Vishnev, Kovshary, Gerdushki region by day's end, while its forward units occupied Traby, Grushentsy, and Iuratishki. It was to capture Lida by the morning of 7 July.

The 31st Army commander was ordered to continue his advance in the direction of Ivenets and Bakshty and reach the Dovgule (14 kilometers northwest of Rakuv), Rakuv, and Kovshovo line by the end of 5 July and the Semerniki (nine kilometers southeast of Volozhin), Pershaie, and Ivenets line by the close of 6 July. The 113th Rifle Corps, reinforced by a tank brigade and self-propelled artillery, was to be placed behind the left flank in the Minsk region to protect the left flank and the city of Minsk.

Operating in the *front*'s center, the 11th Guards Army received the mission to continue its energetic advance in the direction of Krevo and Oshmiany, with its main forces on the Berezina River's northern bank. It was to capture the (excluding) Mkhnevichi,

Klochkovo, and Dubina line by the end of 5 July, and the Kushliany (12 kilometers southwest of Smorgon), Krevo, and Berezina River line by the end of 6 July.

The 5th Army achieved the greatest success along the Vilnius axis during the course of 5 July. Having advanced up to 20 kilometers in a single day, the army's forces defeated an enemy grouping consisting of the 391st Security Division, the 212th Infantry Division's 520th Regiment, the 51st Security Regiment, the 197th Fusilier Battalion, the 644th Construction Battalion, and the 234th Security Battalion in the Lake Svir' and Lake Vishnevskoe region, and captured around 500 prisoners. Having liberated more than 200 towns and villages, the army had completely fulfilled its assigned mission by the end of the day, and its 72d and 65th Rifle Corps had reached the Nareishe, Nestanishki, and Staraia Rudnia front west and southwest of Lake Svir' and five kilometers west of Smorgon'.

The 3d Guards Mechanized Corps captured Smorgon' and advanced along the Molodechno-Vilnius railroad line. However, having encountered strong enemy resistance, it continued to fight and reached only the Gautsevichi and Venslanenty line (eight kilometers west of Smorgon') by the end of the day.

The 5th Guards Tank Army moved forward along the Vilnius axis. Attacking from the south, its 29th Tank Corps took part in the liberation of Molodechno, and its forward units had reached the Losk region by day's end.

The 3d Guards Tank Corps captured Volozhin.

The 31st Army with the 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps advanced most successfully along the Lida axis. Having fulfilled its day's mission, its 71st and 36th Rifle Corps had reached the Dovgule, Rakuv, and Kovshovo front by the end of 5 July. At the same time, the 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps' forward units had occupied Ivenets.

The 31st Army's 113th Rifle Corps, with the 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Corps' 26th Tank Brigade and the 213th Separate Tank Brigade, was directed to the region southeast of Minsk to protect the city against the enemy grouping to the east and southeast.

Having captured Molodechno, the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps advanced southwest along the Lida axis and was able to reach only the Khozhuv region (eight kilometers south of Molodechno) during the second half of the day.

After capturing Molodechno together with units of the 5th Guards Tank Army and the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps, the 11th Guards Army employed its 16th Guards Rifle Corps in fighting to clear the enemy out of Lebedzeva and its 8th Guards Corps to reach Sugvozdy and Iarmaki. The 36th Guards Rifle Corps, which constituted the [army] second echelon, was on the march in the Molodechno region.

The *front*'s forces continued to develop the offensive on 6 July.

Having smashed the resistance of enemy screens, the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps forced the Shmianka River during the first half of the day and, while developing the offensive along the Molodechno-Vilnius railroad line, its forward units reached the region west of Soly.

The 5th Guards Tank Army's 29th Tank Corps captured Krevo and continued to operate against Oshmiany. At the same time, its 3d Guards Tank Corps forced the Berezina River, occupied Vishnev, and advanced toward Gol'shany.

The 5th Army occupied more than 300 towns and villages during the day, including Mikhalishki, Gerviaty, and Soly, and, having advanced 25–35 kilometers, reached the

Podvorzhizhna, Gradovshchizna, and Narbutovshchizna front (five kilometers southwest of Soly).

Having forced the Berezina River in the Nerovy and Adamovo sector, the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps reached Vishnev and developed the offensive along the Molodechno-Lida railroad line.

Having liberated as many as 130 towns and villages, the 31st Army's right flank reached the Semerniki and Pershaie line by the end of the day, and its center reached the Isloch' River in the Borkovshchizna and Rakuv sector.

While protecting the *front*'s left flank, the army made no further substantive progress in this region.

The enemy resisted most stubbornly opposite the 11th Guards Army's front. Seeking to contain our offensive, the Germans brought forward from Narva the 170th Infantry Division, which, together with 5th Panzer Division units and remnants of the 286th Security Division and other police and security units, they committed to battle in the region west of Molodechno.

The 11th Guards Army employed an enveloping maneuver from the flanks with the 16th and 8th Guards Rifle Corps' forces to throw the enemy back to the west and reached a line northwest of Krevo and Bogdanuv by the end of the day.

Simultaneously, our aviation conducted ground attacks against enemy personnel and equipment on the roads running from Krevo to Oshmiany, Gol'shany, and Bogdanuv.

Aggressively taking the offensive, the *front*'s right-flank forces approached the immediate vicinity of Vilnius on 7 July.

Covering more than 40 kilometers in a single day, the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps' 8th Guards Mechanized Brigade and the 5th Army's forward detachments captured the Viliia River's western bank and the enemy's first trenches on the northern approaches to the city from the march during the second half of the day. At the same time, the 35th Guards Tank Brigade began fighting on the [city's] southwestern outskirts.

The 5th Army's forces occupied more than 400 towns and villages and, at the same time, completely destroyed the enemy garrison in Podbrodze. Small enemy groups from the remnants of the 14th and 95th Infantry Divisions attempted to resist several times during the day, but they were driven out of a number of towns and villages and thrown back to Vilnius.

Having advanced 30–35 kilometers, the 72d Rifle Corps arrived along the Gritsiuny and Lake Batzis front northeast of Vilnius by the end of the day. The forward detachments of the 65th Rifle Corps were fighting alongside the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps on the northeastern and eastern outskirts of Vilnius, while the [corps'] main forces reached the Loznike-Gurne and Kena line (10–12 kilometers east of Vilnius).

The 5th Guards Tank Army's 29th Tank Corps captured Zhuprany and advanced to Medniki, while its 3d Guards Tank Corps, together with units from the 11th Guards Army, fought against approaching enemy reserves south of Gol'shany.

Having reached the Gav'ia River, along the Lida axis the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps captured Subbotniki and Ev'e.

At the same time, while advancing successfully south of the Molodechno-Lida railroad line, the 31st Army used its 71st Rifle Corps to reach the line south of Bogdanuv and Bakshty. Meanwhile, its 36th and 2d Guards Tatsinskaia Tank Corps moved to cover the *front*'s left flank on the line south of the Ivenets-Volma road (west of Minsk).

The 11th Guards Army was moving forward more slowly. While committing additional forces from their reserves, the Germans continued to resist most stubbornly in the *front*'s center, while seeking to contain our offensive and isolate the Vilnius grouping from the Lida grouping.

The enemy launched counterattacks from the regions west of Bogdanuv and Gol'shany several times employing units from the 5th and 7th Panzer Divisions, the 170th and 35th Infantry Divisions, the 707th Security Division, Group Mueller, the 2d, 24th, and 26th Police Regiments, and other security sub-units, supported by 100 tanks and self-propelled guns.

Repulsing these enemy infantry and tank counterattacks, the 11th Guards Army fought fiercely to advance four-six kilometers during the day. The 16th Guards Rifle Corps reached the front south of Zhuprany and Boruny, and the 8th Guards Rifle Corps reached Semerniki (five kilometers southeast of Gol'shany) and west of Bogdanuv. The 36th Guards Rifle Corps was concentrating in the Krevo region.

Our aviation operated effectively during the day. It delivered a massive attack against the Germans' Vilnius airfield and shot down 14 enemy aircraft in air combat.

The 5th Army penetrated into Vilnius on 8 July and engaged in street battles together with units from the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps and the 5th Guards Tank Army (which had approached from the southeast). Simultaneously, the army's units bypassed the city from the north and south and cut the rail lines running from Vilnius to Lida and Grodno, thus threatening the Germans' Vilnius garrison with encirclement.

The 3d Guards Cavalry Corps' units attacked aggressively from the north, east, and south on the same day and penetrated into Lida. After successful street battles, it completely captured the town on 9 July.

Capture of Vilnius and arrival of 3d Belorussian Front's forces at the Neman River

The struggle for Vilnius took place during 8–13 July.

The German command attached great significance to retaining Vilnius. It was an important strong point on the approaches to East Prussia, and protected Army Group North's right flank.

In addition, while attempting to contain the Red Army's offensive along the central axis, the enemy wanted to gain time by a stubborn defense of the city in order to reorganize and refit his beaten units, bring reserves forward, and create a new front along the Lida and Vilnius line.

The wooded nature of the terrain, the many lakes, and the presence of many water obstacles (the Viliia, Marechanka, and Dzitva Rivers) contributed to the organization of a new defensive position.

The Germans had already begun to build defensive structures in the Vilnius region long before the approach of our forward units. The city itself was also strongly fortified. The Vilnius garrison consisted of the remnants of the 14th and 299th Infantry and the 221st and 391st Security Divisions, sub-units of the 170th Infantry Division, the 765th and 671st Mountain Rifle Brigades, the 712th Grenadier Regiment, the 9th Police Regiment, the 11th, 12th, and 16th Sapper Battalions, the 236th Security and 644th Construction Battalions, and several march and training sub-units. In addition, to assist

the Vilnius garrison during the fighting, the Germans dropped up to 600 parachutists from the 2d Airborne Division's 6th Regiment, which had been hurriedly transported by aircraft from Germany. The many different designations of the remnants of defeated formations and units assembled to defend Vilnius attests to the heavy losses suffered by the enemy during our offensive. The overall strength of the German garrison in the city reached 12,000–15,000 men. The enemy had tanks, artillery, and self-propelled guns.

However, the Germans did not succeed in fully exploiting the defensive positions that they had prepared on the approaches to the city. The aggressive advance of the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps and the 5th Army's forward detachments, which had already penetrated to the outskirts of Vilnius by 7 July, immediately deprived the enemy of the possibility of conducting defensive battles under field conditions, and imposed heavy street fighting upon him. At the same time, the arrival on 8 July of the 72d Rifle Corps' right flank at the Podberez'e position (west of Resha) to the northwest of Vilnius, and the cutting of all roads leaving the city to the southwest and west by the units of the 65th Rifle Corps, isolated the enemy grouping and destroyed the possibility of its cooperation with forces defending along the remaining front.

While continuing to fight in the city's northern and northwestern sections on 9 July, the 72d Rifle Corps' left-flank units (from the 215th Rifle Division) reached the Viliia River's northern bank, west of Vilnius. At the same time, the 65th Rifle Corps' 97th Rifle Division crossed to the river's northern bank in the Ponary region.

As a result, the German garrison was encircled. Units from the 72d and 65th Rifle Corps, operating together with the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps and compressing the enemy from the north, east, and south, captured the entire northern, eastern, and southern sections of the city on the same day.

Units from the 5th Guards Tank Army had already captured the railroad station and airfield the previous day.

The fighting continued in the center of the city and in its western section. In order to assist its forces encircled in the Vilnius region, the Germans withdrew a group of up to a motorized infantry regiment with 150 tanks and self-propelled guns from other front sectors north of Vilnius and dispatched it to Meishagola and Ev'e on the night of 9 July with the mission of penetrating the encirclement ring. At the same time, enemy aviation attempted to bomb our combat formations and the Vileika and Viliia River crossings.

Fierce battles raged in the Meishagola region on 9, 10, and the first half of 11 July. Having occupied defenses along the Podberez'e and Shvedy line, the 72d Corps' 63d and 277th Rifle Divisions repulsed the enemy attacks. An antitank brigade and self-propelled artillery regiments were sent to assist them.

The situation created by the Germans' commitment of new forces along the Vilnius axis required the immediate withdrawal of mobile formations from the city and the deployment of the 5th Army's main forces north of the Viliia River. Therefore, the *front* commander ordered on 9 July that two divisions be left for the ultimate destruction of the Germans' Vilnius garrison and the city's capture, and that the 5th Army's main forces launch an offensive on the morning of 11 July with the mission of completely defeating the enemy's Meishagola grouping. The 3d Guards Mechanized Corps, which had been transferred to the operational control of the 5th Army commander at 2400 hours on 9 July, was ordered to cross to the Viliia River's northern bank and concentrate northwest of Resha for an attack on Meishagola.

The 5th Guards Tank Army was also withdrawn from Vilnius and concentrated in the Rudzishki and Landvorovo region in readiness for operations to envelop Meishagola from the southwest.

Units from the 72d Rifle and 3d Guards Mechanized Corps defeated the Meishagola grouping on 11 and 12 July and drove it back to the northwest. The 5th Army's right-flank forces occupied Meishagola and reached a line northwest of Meishagola and Ev'e. Simultaneously, while advancing southwest of Vilnius, the 45th Rifle Corps' left flank reached Sumelishki and Vysokii Dvor.

Meanwhile, the struggle in Vilnius itself continued. Blocking and destroying enemy centers of resistance, the 65th Rifle Corps' units advanced to the center of the city. Supporting the ground force units, our aviation subjected the enemy garrison to shattering attacks. Bombers from the 1st Air Army conducted 370 aircraft sorties on 12 July, dropping around 90 tons of bombs on the enemy's principal center of resistance in the prison region alone. Taking advantage of the air strikes, our units occupied the center of the city by the morning of 13 July and split the German garrison into two principal groups. The first continued to resist in the Lukishki region, with the prison as its main strong point, and the second defended in the region of the observatory.

The enemy attempted to penetrate to the northwest along the Viliia River's northern bank on the morning of 13 July with three groups totaling up to 1,000 men, but encountered the 45th Rifle Corps' units and was almost completely destroyed.

The last centers of resistance were stormed at midday on 13 July, and the city was completely cleared of enemy groups by 1700 hours.

The enemy once again attempted to aid its Vilnius garrison on that day. Having concentrated in a narrow sector up to 40 tanks and 100 motor vehicles with motorized infantry from the 6th Panzer Division, the 221st Security Division, and the 16th Police and 5th and 6th Airborne Regiments, the Germans launched an attack in the region northwest of Ev'e.

Taking advantage of the gap between the forward units of the 72d and 45th Rifle Corps, which were advancing toward the Zhosli, Egeliany, and Uzhugost' front, the enemy captured Ev'e, and part of his forces penetrated to Rykonty. The 5th Guards Tank Army's 29th Tank Corps was sent to the Rykonty region to liquidate the grouping that had penetrated. The 72 Rifle Corps' left flank occupied positions along the Viliia River's southern bank with its front facing to the south and southwest. At the same time, the 45th Rifle Corps' right-flank units advanced to the sector south of Rykonty with its front facing to the north. The enemy grouping in the Rykonty region was enveloped from three directions and defeated on 14 July. Those remnants that broke out of the closing ring withdrew to the northwest.

The 5th Army, operating together with the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps and the 5th Guards Tank Army, completely defeated the Germans' Vilnius grouping during the battles for Vilnius.

During 7–13 July our units destroyed more than 8,000 German soldiers and officers. They took 5,200 men prisoner and captured 156 guns, 28 tanks and self-propelled guns, 48 mortars, 291 machine-guns, 7,000 rifles and automatic weapons, 1,500 motor vehicles, 100 motorcycles, eight radio stations, 500 horses, 56 storage depots with ammunition, 97 storage depots with military goods and food, six railroad trains, four steam cars, and two shunting engines. In addition, the enemy lost as many as 1,000 men

killed and wounded and more than 350 taken prisoner, 13 tanks, 18 armored transports, 45 motor vehicles, six APCs (Armoured Personnel Carriers), 12 guns, six airplanes, and one armored train in the Ev'e and Rykonty region.

While the 5th Army was struggling to capture Vilnius, the 11th Guards Army was continuing to develop the offensive in the direction of Orany.

Having already thrown the enemy screen back, the 16th Guards Rifle Corps reached the banks of the Neman River north and south of Alitus on 13 July. The 36th Guards Rifle Corps, which had moved forward from the second echelon, captured Orany and was fighting street battles on the Lake Davgi and Prelai line against the German 131st Infantry Division's units, which had just arrived.

While continuing to fight southeast of Prelai with its right flank, the 8th Guards Rifle Corps used its main forces to reach Merechanka.

After capturing Lida and turning over the town to the 31st Army's rifle divisions, the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps fought for and crossed the Dzitva River and reached the Novy Dvur and Vasilishki region on 11 July, having captured both points. Here it received a new mission to regroup its forces to the right flank and swiftly advance in the general direction of Bershty and Grodno. It was to capture the Stara Ruda, Rybnitsa Station, and Nova Ruda region by the end of 12 July and capture the city of Grodno with an attack from the north by the end of 13 July.

Operating with the support of a composite fighter brigade and two bomber and two assault aviation brigades, the corps captured Pozheche Station and Nova Ruda on 12 July and developed the offensive along the Vilnius-Grodno railroad line. Our cavalry seized five trains with ammunition and military goods and a tank train at Pozheche and Rybnitsa Stations.

The 3d Guards Cavalry Corps reached the immediate vicinity of Grodno by the end of 13 July and was engaged in fierce fighting against counterattacking enemy infantry and tanks on the northern and northeastern approaches to the city.

Exploiting the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps' success, the 31st Army's forward units advanced and reached a line extending from Rondomantsy, north of Pozheche, through Nova Ruda to Ezery during the second half of 13 July.

While continuing to liquidate the enemy grouping in the Rykonty region with a part of its forces in cooperation with the 5th Guards Army, the 5th Army's right flank captured the large town and railroad junction of Koshedary on 14 July, reaching the Koshedary and Zhizhmory line. Its left flank reached the Neman River in the Puni, and (excluding) Alitus sector.

At the same time, the 11th Guards Army's 36th Guards Rifle Corps used an enveloping maneuver to drive back the German 131st Infantry Division. A part of this force fought its way across the Neman north and south of Alitus and in the Gudele region, having seized a bridgehead on an overall front of up to 35 kilometers to a depth of two-six kilometers. While repulsing fierce attacks by units of the German 60th Panzer Grenadier Division and a composite German division, the 16th Guards Rifle Corps' units enveloped the German Alitus garrison from the north, east, and south, and captured the road junctions northwest and west of the city.

Simultaneously, the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps continued heavy fighting in the northern outskirts of Grodno and forced the Neman northwest of Grodno with one regiment, capturing a bridgehead with a depth of three kilometers.

The 31st Army's right flank captured Druskeniki, a large town on the Neman's eastern bank, during 14 July and reached the river on an extensive front from Druskeniki to Gozha. The lead units of the 36th Corps' 220th Rifle Division, operating on the left flank together with the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps, forced the Neman in the Shembelevitse and Berezhany sector (eight kilometers northwest of Grodno) and fought to widen the bridgehead on the western bank.

The *front*'s forces continued to force the Neman River on 15 July and to widen their bridgeheads on the western bank along all of the armies' fronts.

The 5th Army fought for possession of Rumshishki on the river's eastern bank with a portion of its right-flank 72d Corps. At the same time, the two divisions of the army's 45th Rifle Corps forced the Neman River south of Birshtany and Raudaniki on a front of up to 15 kilometers.

Having encircled the enemy garrison in Alitus, the 11th Guards Army completely destroyed it and captured the town after two days of heavy fighting. Exploiting this success, the 16th and 36th Guards Rifle Corps widened the bridgeheads from Raudaniki to Krikshtany. The 8th Guards Rifle Corps captured Merech', and its left flank widened the bridgehead that had been seized the previous day to the Duboklantse and Bil'ikovtse line, a depth of six-eight kilometers.

A portion of the 31st Army's forces forced the Neman River south of Druskeniki, seized a bridgehead on the western bank, and reached the Druskeniki, Gollovenchitse, Shembelevitse, and Ballia Sol'naia front (six kilometers northwest of Grodno).

The *front*'s armies had forced the river on a front of 70 kilometers by the end of 15 July, and the depth of the bridgeheads ranged from eight to ten kilometers. Units from the 31st Army had reached the 1939 state border with Germany in the Motsevichi and Gollovenchitse sector on the *front*'s left flank.

Units of the 36th Rifle and 3d Guards Cavalry Corps defeated the German 50th Infantry Division on 16 July in cooperation with the 2d Belorussian Front's 50th Army. Together, these forces captured a major railroad junction and an important German fortified defensive region—the city and fortress of Grodno—by storm after three days of fighting.

Thus, during the period from 5–15 July, *front* forces completely fulfilled the mission assigned to them by the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command. Together with the 2d Belorussian Front, they liquidated the remnants of the German Fourth Army east of Minsk, liberated Vilnius (the capital of the Lithuanian Soviet Republic), and, having reached the Neman River, captured bridgeheads on its western bank. This created favorable conditions for the subsequent offensive to the borders of East Prussia.

PURSUIT OF GERMAN FORCES BY 2D BELORUSSIAN FRONT AND ARRIVAL AT THE GRODNO AND VOLKOVYSK LINE

Front missions

The capture of Minsk by our forces was a decisive defeat for German Army Group Center. A small part of this group continued to recoil to the west under the attacks by our

forces, while a large part of the remnants of German formations was encircled east of Minsk and destroyed by the 2d and 3d Belorussian Fronts' formations.

On 4 July 1944 the Supreme High Command assigned the 2d Belorussian Front the mission to develop the offensive while delivering its main attack in the direction of Novogrudok, Volkovysk, and Belostok. The *front*'s immediate mission was to capture the Novogrudok region and reach the Neman and Molchad' Rivers no later than 12–15 July. The subsequent mission was to capture Volkovysk and advance in the direction of Belostok. This directive established that the *front* would consist of the 50th, 49th, and 3d Armies. Two other directives transferred the 33d Army (seven rifle divisions with two corps headquarters) to the 3d Belorussian Front as of 2400 hours on 5 July and subordinated the 3d Army, which consisted of nine rifle divisions with three corps headquarters (from the 1st Belorussian Front), to the 2d Belorussian Front as of 2400 hours on 4 July.

For the sake of subsequent operations, a [new] boundary line was established for the 2d Belorussian Front. On the right, it extended to Minsk as before, and further through] Nikolaev, Dokudovo, and Ostryna to Grodno—all inclusive for the 3d Belorussian Front. On the left, with the 1st Belorussian Front, it extended to Svisloch' (30 kilometers northwest of Bobruisk) as before, and further through Osipovichi, Belaia Luzha, Gorodzei, Molchad', Zel'va, and Svisloch' to Surazh (all except for Belaia Luzha, Gorodzei, and Molchad' inclusive for the 2d Belorussian Front). These boundary lines were established at 2400 hours on 4 July.

Fulfillment of immediate mission

Fulfilling the *Stavka* directive, the 2d Belorussian Front continued to pursue the Germans to the west with its main forces on 5 July and completed the destruction of German forces encircled east of Minsk with a portion of its forces. Assessing the existing situation and the 3d Army's forward position, the *front* commander assigned it the mission to advance aggressively westward in the *front*'s sector while tirelessly pursuing the remnants of the defeated German units. The corps and divisions of the 50th and 49th Armies, which were not engaged in combat operations to liquidate the encircled German grouping, were to advance behind the 3d Army. The idea was to introduce the 50th and 49th Armies' formations into the frontline from behind the 3d Army"s right flank in the event enemy resistance intensified.

While continuing to advance and having completed its regrouping, the 3d Army reached the Dubovo, Ruzhanka, and Uzda line by the end of 5 July. During the next few days (6–9 July), the 3d Army dislodged the German rear guards and covering detachments, which consisted of units and sub-units from the 28th Light Infantry [Jäger] Division, the 12th and 20th Panzer Divisions, and the 50th, 134th, and 342d Infantry Divisions, advanced 110–120 kilometers at an average tempo of 30 kilometers per day, captured Novogrudok, and forced the Neman and Molchad' Rivers along the Dokudovo, Novoel'nia, and Molchad' line. In this fashion, the 2d Belorussian Front executed the immediate mission assigned to it by the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command. While completing difficult combat marches of 30–35 kilometers each per day across wooded and swampy terrain, within five days the army's three rifle corps (35th, 41st, and 40th, with three rifle divisions each) fulfilled a mission for which the *Stavka* had allocated the

front 8–11 days. Routing enemy covering detachments, the 3d Army's forces destroyed more than 2,000 Hitlerites and took 380 Germans prisoner during this period.

Having been ordered by the *front* commander to advance westward, the 5th Army advanced its forces to the Koidanovo, Stan'kovo, and Troevka line (30–40 kilometers southwest of Minsk) on 5 July. However, in view of the fact that almost all of the army's formations were engaged in the struggle against the encircled German grouping southeast and east of Minsk, only the 70th Rifle Corps (consisting of the 64th and 199th Rifle Divisions), which had completed a march from the Dukora region, was able to reach the Ozero and Korma region (25–30 kilometers south of Minsk) by the end of 5 July. The 19th Rifle Corps (consisting of the 380th, 324th, and 362d Rifle Divisions) was transferred to the 33d Army at 0800 hours on 5 July, and continued to fight all day against the encircled German grouping in the Volma, Pekalin, and Shabuni region. The 38th Corps (consisting of the 110th and 385th Rifle Divisions), that had begun to move westward, was forced to deploy along the Kotiagi and Annopol' line (10–20 kilometers south of Minsk). This was because a strong German group had broken out from the Volma region to the southwest. Here the corps fought against Germans who were stubbornly attempting to break through the corps' combat formations. The 121st Rifle Corps continued to march to the west, and two of its divisions (the 238th and 139th) reached the Minsk-Osipovichi railroad line at Karoslitsa by day's end. The corps' 330th Rifle Division was fighting in the region five-eight kilometers southwest of Volma.

The army continued to commit its corps to the west during 6–8 July, and they had reached the following areas by the end of 8 July. The 121st Rifle Corps was in the Iuzefino region and further to the south. The 70th Rifle Corps' advanced 64th Rifle Division was approaching Rap'ovo and the 199th Division was moving behind it, 15 kilometers to the east. [Finally,] the 38th Rifle Corps continued to fight against the German groupings attempting to break through to the southwest on the Kotiagi and Annopol' line. The army's forces destroyed around 4,000 Hitlerites and took 3,400 prisoner in combat against the Germans during 5–8 July. The army's mobile detachment (consisting of the 23d Tank Brigade, the 1434th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment, two regiments from the 5th Antitank Brigade, and other sub-units) advanced in front of the army's leading corps. It captured Novogrudok at 1830 hours on 8 July in cooperation with units of the 3d Army's 258th Rifle Division and exploited success to the west.

The 50th Army transferred the 38th Corps (consisting of the 110th and 385th Rifle Divisions) to the 49th Army on 9 July and received from it the 81st and 69th Corps. Marching westward, the [two corps] reached the Rudnia Nalibotska and Chernaia line and had their mobile detachment in the Vseliub region by the morning of 9 July. Continuing its westward advance, the 50th Army had reached the Neman River north of Shchorsy with its 69th Rifle Corps by the end of 9 July, and its 70th Rifle Corps forced the river south of Shchorsy and reached five-seven kilometers west of Korelichi. Advancing in second echelon, the 81st and 121st Rifle Corps were approaching the Neman River from the east, moving 5–10 kilometers behind the 69th Corps. The 330th Rifle Division, which constituted the army's reserve, had reached the Antalezy region by the end of 9 July.

In accordance with a 4 July order from the *front* commander, the 49th Army, consisting of the 69th and 81st Rifle Corps (the 153d, 42d, 95th, 369th, 290th, 157th, and 222d Rifle Divisions), was to reach the Gorodishche and Grichino line (12–17 kilometers

southwest of Minsk) by the end of 5 July and the Rudnia Nalibotska and Chernaia line (70–75 kilometers west of Minsk) by the end of 8 July. Fulfilling this order, the army's 69th Rifle Corps (the 153d and 42d Rifle Divisions) and the 81st Corps (the 95th and 290th Rifle Divisions) had reached the Gorodishche and Grichino line only on 6 July because they were involved in several skirmishes along the way against enemy groups that remained encircled east and south of Minsk. They also had to bypass several sectors where combat operations to defeat encircled German groupings were underway. The corps reached the Rudnia Nalibotska and Chernaia line by the end of 8 July, where they were transferred to the 50th Army at 1000 hours on 9 July in accordance with another order from the *front* commander. Other army divisions took part in the liquidation of the Germans' Minsk grouping and were gradually brought forward.

The *front*'s 4th Air Army conducted reconnaissance and also carried out bombing and ground attacks against enemy forces which were withdrawing westward and were encircled in the regions southeast and south of Minsk, while conducting 50–110 aircraft sorties daily. Enemy aviation was not active and was limited to reconnaissance flights by individual aircraft. Attempts to drop cargo loads for the encircled grouping were quickly halted by our air operations and also because the Germans did not set up identifying signs since they feared that their location would be revealed.

Further pursuit of the Germans to Volkovysk and Grodno

Having forced the Neman and Molchad' Rivers on 9 July, the 2d Belorussian Front's forces began to carry out its subsequent mission—to capture Volkovysk and further develop the offensive in the direction of Belostok.

Having captured the line of the Neman and Molchad' Rivers, the 2d Belorussian Front's formations continued to fight their way forward on 10 July. While doing so, they routed the remnants of defeated units from the 12th and 20th Panzer Divisions, the 50th and 367th Infantry, 28th Light Infantry, and 461st Reserve Infantry Divisions, which had just been brought forward, and up to six different separate regiments (the 2d and 17th Police, 'Mitte', and the 1065th, 1068th, and 1069th Infantry).

The 50th Army advanced from behind the 3d Army's right flank on 10 July, and all four of its rifle corps (the 69th, 70th, 81st, and 121st) crossed the Neman River south of Dokudovo on 11 July and developed an energetic offensive, while routing units of the 50th Infantry Division and separate regiments (reserve, security, and police service). The army forced the Kotra River and captured Skidel' on 13 July, and, while developing the attack with its right flank in cooperation with the 3d Belorussian Front's left-flank formations, it reached the city of Grodno on 15 July. The right-flank formations (the 69th and 81st Rifle Corps) stormed and captured Grodno, a large railroad center and an important fortified region of the German defense, early in the morning on 16 July, in cooperation with the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps and the 3d Belorussian Front's left-flank units. While developing the offensive, and having forced the Neman River for a second time, the army's left flank (the 121st and 70th Corps) reached the immediate approaches to Indura (20–25 kilometers south of Grodno) on 16 July. This created the opportunity for a further offensive by the *front*'s left flank (the 3d Army) and for the defeat of the Germans along the Neman River's left bank in the Grodno region. The 50th Army

advanced 160–170 kilometers during the period from 10 through 16 July, fighting its way 20–25 kilometers per day, and, in some cases, 30–40 kilometers daily.

The 3d Army (consisting of the 35th, 41st, and 40th Rifle Corps) continued its fighting advance westward on 10 July and forced the Zel'vianka River on 12 July. Developing the offensive, the army captured the city and large railroad center of Volkovysk, an important German defensive strong point that covered the route to Belostok, on 14 July. The enemy stubbornly resisted at the Ross' River with units and sub-units of the 367th Infantry, 28th Light Infantry, and 461st Reserve Infantry Divisions, the 12th and 20th Panzer Divisions, and the 611th Security Regiment, supported by artillery and mortar fire and aviation. Having overcome the German defense, the army's two corps forced the Ross' River on 15 July, repulsed a number of counterattacks, and inflicted heavy personnel and equipment losses on the enemy. Three of the army's corps crossed to the Ross' River's western bank on 16 July, fought their way forward 10–20 kilometers, and reached the Dubliany and Mstibuv line with the mission to develop the offensive in the direction of Belostok. The army's formations fought their way forward 90–100 kilometers during 10–16 July, averaging 14–15 kilometers per day on untrafficable, wooded and swampy terrain and forcing four rivers (the Molchad', Shara, Zel'vianka, and Ross'), which were serious water obstacles.

The 49th Army received the mission to liquidate the remnants of the encircled enemy grouping in the *front* sector east of the Neman River and to move by forced march in the general direction of Turets and Novogrudok by the end of 11 July. Simultaneously, the 307th and 343d Rifle Divisions, which previously had constituted the *front* reserve, were transferred to the army at 2400 hours on 10 July. While carrying out its mission, the army had basically finished liquidating the encircled German grouping southeast and south of Minsk by 11 July. The army, now consisting of the 38th Rifle Corps (the 385th and 110th Rifle Divisions) and the 324th, 369th, 380th, 307th, and 343d Rifle Divisions, moved westward during 12–13 July and combed the woods on its path. While doing so it employed separate units and sub-units to clean out small enemy groups that were attempting to hide and break out to the west. The 49th Army had concentrated in the Vseliub, Novogrudok, and Turets region by the end of 13 July, where on 14 and 15 July it rested, reorganized its forces, and brought forward its rear services that were lagging behind. Simultaneously, the army continued to comb the forests in the region with specially allocated detachments in order to liquidate the small enemy groups wandering in the region.

While located in the *front*'s second echelon, the 49th Army continued to move westward on 16 July and reached the Belitsa, Orlia, and Diatlovo region by the end of the day.

The 4th Air Army carried out ground strikes and bombed the enemy, covered its own forces, and conducted reconnaissance during the period when the enemy was being pursued from Minsk to the Grodno and Volkovysk line. It conducted around 100–200 aircraft sorties daily. Enemy aviation was limited to reconnaissance operations and attempts to supply the encircled enemy groupings prior to 11 July. Enemy air activity increased after 11 July, and enemy aviation flew 80–120 aircraft sorties in the front sector and bombed combat formations and crossings as our forces approached Grodno.

The Belorussian partisans rendered the *front* considerable assistance during the period 5–16 July and during the defeat of the encircled German grouping in the Minsk region

and the pursuit of the enemy. Thus, three partisan groups (numbering a total of 3,500 men), which reinforced the 3d Army's 35th Corps, showed themselves to be good fighters and distinguished themselves in battles as models of combat excellence, bravery, and heroism. The command also noted the excellent combat work of the Cherven' partisans and of Baranov's Dzerzhinsky Brigade, which fought capably and bravely, destroying the enemy as he attempted to break out of the Minsk pocket.

The 2d Belorussian Front's forces fought their way forward up to 270 kilometers during 5–16 July while pursuing the enemy from Minsk to the Grodno, Indura, and Mstibuv line and attained an average tempo of 20–25 kilometers per day. The *front*'s forces (primarily the 49th Army) participated in the defeat of the encircled enemy grouping in the region southeast and south of Minsk during this period, destroying more than 52,000 Germans and taking 28,243 prisoners, including nine generals. During the pursuit west of Minsk, the *front*'s formations fought their way forward, forcing the Neman, Molchad', Shara, Zel'vianka, Ross', and Kotra Rivers and inflicting serious damage against enemy formations that had just been brought forward and against the remnants of German formations that had previously opposed the *front*. With the capture of Grodno and Volkovysk, the *front*'s forces had reached the strong point and road junction of Belostok city.

1ST BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S PURSUIT OF ENEMY TO BARANOVICHI, SLONIM, RUZHANY, BEREZA-KARTUSKA, AND PINSK

Stavka of the Supreme High Command Directive No. 220127, dated 4 July 1944, ordered the 1st Belorussian Front to develop the offensive to the southwest, delivering the main attack in the general direction of Baranovichi and Brest. The *front*'s immediate mission was to capture Baranovichi and Luninets and to reach the Slonim, Shara River, and Pinsk line no later than 10–12 July. Subsequently, it was to capture Brest and seize a bridgehead on the left bank of the Western Bug River.

A new boundary line was established with the 2d Belorussian Front at 2400 hours on 4 July, which ran from Osipovichi through Belaia Luzha, Gorodzei, Molchad', Zel'va, Svisloch' to Surazh (all points except Osipovichi, Gorodzei, and Molchad were exclusively for the 1st Belorussian Front).

Fulfilling the *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command's order, on this day Marshal of the Soviet Union Rokossovsky assigned his forces the following missions:

- The *48th Army*—while protecting your right flank against enemy counterattacks from the north and northwest, pursue the enemy aggressively in the general direction of Mogil'no and Snuv with the mission to capture the Stankevichi, (excluding) and Novaia Mysh' line by the end of 7 July. The boundary line to the left is Nesvizh, Baranovichi, and Novaia Mysh' (all points except Nesvizh exclusively for the 48th Army);
- The *65th Army*—continue the attack in the general direction of Baranovichi with the mission to capture the Novaia Mysh' and Mlynok line by the close of 6 July. The boundary line on the left is Timkovichi, Kletsk, Liakhoviche, and Les'na (all points exclusively for the 65th Army);

- The *28th Army*—tack along the highway in the general direction of Milovidy and capture the Bogushe, five kilometers south of Mlynok, and Tukhoviche line by the end of 6 July; and
- The *61st Army*—using the 89th Rifle Corps, pursue the enemy aggressively along the railroad in the general direction of Luninets in cooperation with the Dnepr Military Flotilla.

The 4th Guards Cavalry Corps commander was to launch a decisive attack in the general direction of Polonechka and Stoloviche with all of the group's forces (the 4th Guards Cavalry Corps and 9th Tank Corps) with the mission to capture Baranovichi. The 1st Mechanized Corps was to attack from the Kletsk region to Baranovichi.

Thus, without halting his pursuit of the enemy, the *front* commander decided to encircle the enemy's Baranovichi grouping, destroy it, and capture Baranovichi by means of a concentric attack by the 48th and 65th Armies in the general direction of Baranovichi and a simultaneous envelopment of the enemy by General Pliev's group and the 1st Mechanized Corps. Subsequently, while exploiting the two parallel highways (Slonim-Pruzhany and Baranovichi-Brest), he planned to exploit success in the general direction of Brest with a deep envelopment and encirclement of the Germans' Pinsk grouping (jointly with the *front*'s left flank, which had launched an attack along the Kovel' axis on 4 July).

The battle for Baranovichi

While continuing to pursue the enemy on the above-mentioned axes, the *front*'s forces simultaneously regrouped and entered their boundary lines on 5 July.

Having wheeled from the Nesvizh region to the southwest, the 65th Army entered its boundaries, destroyed the German forces defending in the Snuv region with a powerful attack by the right flank, and captured the town. Its left flank arrived west of Kletsk.

While enveloping Baranovichi from the south, the 28th Army energetically pursued the enemy along the highway and captured Liakhoviche and Nedzveditsa by the end of 5 July.

The 1st Mechanized Corps attacked at the junction between these armies in the general direction of Baranovichi with the mission to penetrate into the town on the shoulders of the withdrawing enemy and capture it before the arrival of the 48th and 65th Armies' main forces. The corps penetrated the enemy defense on the line of the Vedzhmanka River at dawn on 5 July and reached the Shara River's eastern bank at 0730 hours. It was, however, not able to advance further. Units from the German 4th Panzer Division, which had been transferred east from Baranovichi, resisted stubbornly and forced the corps to shift to the defensive. The 219th Tank Brigade fought at Iushkeviche, the 37th Motorized Rifle Brigade at Odakhovshizna, and the 35th Motorized Rifle Brigade at Velikaia Lotva.

Operating north of Baranovichi, the 4th Guards Cavalry Corps repelled fierce counterattacks by the German 110th Infantry Division, reinforced with a large number of tanks, and had reached the Iurevichi and Polonechka line by day's end, where it also consolidated its positions.

The 9th Tank Corps was approaching from the Gorodzei region.

The 48th Army's main forces, whose units were to make a forced march of 40–60 kilometers before entering into their newly assigned sector, reached the Neman River near Mogil'no by the end of 5 July and prepared for a crossing.

The 1st Guards Don Tank Corps, constituting the *front* commander's reserve, remained in the Valer'iany and Losha region (55 kilometers east of Mogil'no).

The 16th Air Army aviation, flying in groups of ground attack aircraft accompanied by fighters, attacked enemy forces in regions north and east of Baranovichi throughout the day, completing up to 400 aircraft sorties.

While constantly continuing to reinforce its Baranovichi grouping, the German command had concentrated the 28th Light Infantry Division and the 3d Cavalry Brigade in the Baranovichi region by 5 July, in addition to the 4th Panzer and the Hungarian 1st Cavalry Divisions, which had already been transferred here.

The Germans resisted our advancing units stubbornly with powerful fire and several infantry and tank counterattacks all day on 5 July, attempting to prevent them from reaching the Baranovichi region. Enemy aviation conducted reconnaissance up to the Bobruisk and Mozyr' line by individual aircraft and used small groups to bomb the 4th Guards Cavalry Corps' combat formations. Up to 40 German aircraft subjected the Manevichi railroad station to intense bombing on the night of 5 July.

The fighting for Baranovichi was particularly intense on 6 and 7 July.

After a powerful artillery raid supported by large groups of aircraft, our forces attacked the enemy simultaneously along the entire front on the morning of 6 July. However, only the 65th Army units, which had replaced the 1st Mechanized Corps, succeeded in penetrating the enemy's defense and advancing slightly. The remaining forces continued heavy fighting along their previous lines during the entire day. In addition, the existing situation demanded the rapid liquidation of the enemy's center of resistance in the Baranovichi region and quick development of the offensive to Brest to unite with the *front*'s left-flank formations, which had captured Kovel' on this day.

Considering the enemy's stubborn resistance east of Baranovichi, the *front* commander decided to transfer the 1st Mechanized Corps northward to the Iushkeiviche region on 6 July in order to penetrate the town from the northeast and capture it on 7 July together with the 9th Tank Corps and the 48th Army's main forces, which were just approaching the town.

Fighting in the Baranovichi region resumed with new intensity on 7 July. Beginning at dawn, more than 500 bombers took off and subjected the enemy's defense, primarily on the 65th and 28th Armies' front, to powerful fire. Simultaneously, artillery opened fire against these regions. The enemy's positions were subjected to continuous shelling and bomb explosions for an hour and a half.

Having attacked the enemy decisively, our tanks and infantry penetrated the German defense with a powerful attack from several directions and swiftly made their way into the town, energetically driving the German units back to the west.

Advancing swiftly, the 4th Guards Cavalry Corps cut the Molchad'-Baranovichi rail line, having destroyed up to an infantry regiment in the Bartinki region (15 kilometers southwest of Polonechka). It reached the Cheshevlia (15 kilometers south of Molchad') and Novaia Mysh' line on 8 July, thus deeply enveloping the enemy's Baranovichi group from the northwest. The 48th Army, together with the 9th Tank Corps' tanks, defeated

the 110th Infantry Division's units that were defending northeast of the town. By this time, the main forces had reached the cavalry corps' positions.

Having crushed the enemy's stubborn resistance at the Shara River, the 65th Army's 18th and 105th Rifle Corps had reached the town's eastern outskirts by the close of 7 July. At the same time, the 28th Army's right-flank units were approaching the town from the south and southeast.

Having concealed themselves in the town, the enemy resisted stubbornly on its outskirts. Ensconced in houses, basements, and on rooftops, the Germans directed powerful machine-gun and mortar fire against our troops' positions. The intense fighting on the outskirts continued all night. Only at dawn did they succeed in smashing enemy resistance and penetrating into the town. Baranovichi was completely cleared of the enemy and occupied by our forces on the morning of 8 July. Up to 3,000 German soldiers and officers were killed and a large quantity of equipment and weapons was captured in the fighting for Baranovichi.

Pursuit of enemy toward Brest

After the capture of Baranovichi, our forces quickly began to pursue the enemy in basically two directions: toward Slonim and Ruzhany and toward Ivanevichi Station and Kobryn.

The 48th Army attacked north of the Baranovichi, Slonim railroad line with the mission to capture the Babinichi and (excluding) Slonim line by the end of 9 July. The army's boundary line was adjusted on 7 July to extend on the right as before, and on the left, to Baranovichi as before, and through Slonim to Kuliany (all points were exclusively for the 48th Army).

The 65th Army attacked to the south with the mission to capture the Slonim and (excluding) Byten' line by the close of 9 July. The army's left boundary line extended to Les'na, as before, and through Byten' and Kossovo to Selets (all points exclusively for the 65th Army).

The 28th Army pursued the enemy in the general direction of Ivanevichi Station with the mission to capture the Kossovo, Ivanevichi Station, and Gichitse line by the end of 9 July.

The 61st Army attacked along the northern bank of the Pripiat' River in the general direction of Pinsk.

The enemy west of Baranovichi and north of Pinsk conducted a fighting withdrawal to the west and northwest, covered by powerful detachments and employing obstacles extensively.

His aviation increased its activity considerably. Enemy aircraft subjected road junctions, columns, and crossings to systematic raids. German aviation in groups of 160–170 aircraft conducted daily night raids against the railroad stations at Korosten, Sarny, and Olevsk in an attempt to disrupt rail transport. We recorded 956 enemy aircraft sorties on 9 and 10 July.

Despite this, our units energetically drove the enemy covering detachments back, and reached the enemy's withdrawal routes and destroyed his forces by means of the swift advance by our mobile detachments. Our average rate of advance was 25–30 kilometers per day. The 48th and 65th Armies' main forces, together with the 4th Guards Cavalry

Corps, reached the Shara River and captured the town and large road junction of Slonim and the town of Luninets along the Pinsk axis on 10 July.

On this very day, the *front* commander ordered the 48th, 65th, and 28th Armies to complete the crossing by their armies' main forces of the Shara River by the morning of 11 July and to advance 10–12 kilometers west of the river. Each army was to dispatch forward detachments, consisting of a rifle division with antitank and self-propelled artillery and tank units, to the Zel'va, Ruzhany, and Kossovo line and secure for themselves crossings over the Zel'vianka River by the end of 11 July. They were to bring their artillery and rear services forward and replenish their supplies on 10 and 11 July. Then, their main forces were to launch a decisive offensive on the morning of 12 July with the mission to reach the Zel'va, Ruzhany, and Kossovo line by the end of the day.

General Pliev's cavalry-mechanized group was to continue its aggressive offensive from the Slonim region in the general direction of Ruzhany with the following missions. The 4th Guards Cavalry Corps was to capture the Lyskuv region and the 9th Tank Corps the Ruzhany and Klepache region, both by 11 July. The 1st Guards Don Tank Corps was ordered to exploit success from the Kabaki region in the direction of Zel'va and Volkovysk with the mission to capture Volkovysk by the end of 11 July. Subsequently, the intention was to continue the offensive to Svisloch'. The 1st Mechanized Corps was to attack from the Zhirovitsy region toward Selets and Kobryn.

Pursuing the enemy, the 1st Belorussian Front advanced rapidly to the west and southwest on 10–12 July, destroying remnants of the defeated units along its path. Having advanced up to 60 kilometers along separate axes, the *front*'s forces had fought their way across the Zel'vianka River by the end of 12 July and occupied a large number of populated areas, including Zel'va, Ruzhany, and Kossovo.

Simultaneously, while continuing its offensive toward Pinsk from the northeast and south, the 61st Army's forces forced the Iasel'da and Pripiat' Rivers and part of its forces engaged in battle on the southeastern outskirts of Pinsk.

The *front* commander left the 28th Army and the 1st Mechanized Corps to pursue the enemy from the Zel'vianka River and Kossovo line in the general direction of Brest, and assigned the 48th and 65th Armies the mission to reach the Ross' River line. The 48th Army was to reach the Ross' River line in the Lopenitsa, Mala, and (excluding) Porozovo line by the end of 14 July, and, developing the offensive in the general direction of Lyskuv and Novy Dvur, the 65th Army was to reach the Porozovo, Novy Dvur, and Radetsk line.

Our units encountered only weak enemy resistance while continuing the offensive along the above-mentioned axes and captured the Belorussian regional center of Pinsk on 14 July. They captured the towns of Bereza-Kartuska and Ianuv on 16 July, and the *front*'s right flank reached the Volkovysk-Sedlets railroad line near Svisloch'.

CONCLUSIONS ON THIRD STAGE OF OPERATION

A large group of isolated German forces numbering around 100,000 men was liquidated near Minsk during the period 5–11 July.

As a result of our shattering blows, which had begun on 23 June and led to the complete defeat of three German armies (the Third Panzer, Fourth, and Ninth), an

enormous breach stretching more than 400 kilometers was formed in the enemy's strategic front. Taking advantage of this situation, our forces energetically pursued the remnants of the beaten German armies westward.

The operations along the Dvinsk axis took on a protracted character by the close of the third stage of the operation. Our forces on the 1st Baltic Front's left flank advanced 140 kilometers in the direction of Ukmerge during 5–15 July.

During this period, the 3d Belorussian Front's forces pursued the enemy toward Vilnius and Lida, and further toward the Neman River, while achieving great success. Our forces advanced 150–220 kilometers westward, defeated German divisions, which had just been brought forward, liberated the Lithuanian SSR's capital of Vilnius, and seized bridgeheads on the Neman's western bank. This created favorable conditions for the subsequent offensive to Kaunas and the borders of East Prussia.

Pursuing the enemy from Minsk to Grodno and Volkovysk, the 2d Belorussian Front fought its way westward about 250 kilometers with a tempo of 20–25 kilometers per day and reached the routes leading to Belostok and East Prussia.

Operating north of the Pripiat', the 1st Belorussian Front's forces drove the enemy out of a number of positions and captured his large strong points, advancing 150–170 kilometers. The *front*'s forces were on the road to Brest, an important communications center and strong fortified region for the German defense along the Warsaw axis.

Thus, during the 23 days that had elapsed since the beginning of the Red Army's offensive in Belorussia, Soviet forces cleared the German-fascist invaders out of the vast territory in the sector between the Western Dvina and Pripiat', which extended more than 400 kilometers from north to south and around 500 kilometers from east to west. While doing so, they liberated almost all of Belorussia and a considerable part of Lithuania.

Making an extraordinary effort, the enemy hurriedly transferred to the central sector of his strategic front all of the reserves that he could withdraw from other axes and bring forward from the rear. The German command committed 13 new divisions (including three panzer divisions) during the third stage of the operation, but, as we have seen, they were unsuccessful in stopping the Soviet forces' victorious offensive.

6
Brief Overview of Combat Operations to the End of July

Restoration of Railroads and Change in Transport Conditions

The Belorussian operation, which was conducted by four closely cooperating *fronts*, was basically completed by mid-July with the defeat of the three German armies in Belorussia and the arrival of Soviet forces along a line extending south of Dvinsk, east of Kaunas, along the Neman to Grodno, and west of Volkovysk and Pinsk.

Subsequently, new strategic missions emerged involving an offensive into East Prussia and also to Riga and Warsaw, which go well beyond the limits of this discussion. These missions did, however, evolve from the overall course of the Belorussian Operation and were associated with it. Thus, it is necessary to illuminate briefly the course of events in the four *fronts* until the end of July in order to establish the general relationship between the Belorussian operation and our subsequent operations and to better conclude this current volume.

The 1st Baltic, and the 3d, 2d, and 1st Belorussian Fronts developed the offensive as before during the last two weeks of July.

Exerting every effort to halt our advance, the German command feverishly continued to bring available reserves forward from other axes and from the rear. Thus, it committed 11 new divisions (including three panzer divisions) into the first line in the period of a single week (17–23 July).

Our forces had already advanced 500 kilometers or more to the west by the end of July in their aggressive offensive and pursuit of the enemy. Certain difficulties, which arose as a consequence of the great extension of the rear area (interruptions in the delivery of fuel and other supplies, delays in the arrival of reinforcements, etc.) became apparent.

Despite all of this and the increased enemy resistance, Soviet forces successfully fulfilled their assigned missions. The 1st Baltic Front advanced northwest along the lower part of the Western Dvina. The 3d, 2d, and 1st Belorussian Fronts advanced to the borders of East Prussia and Poland.

OFFENSIVE ALONG THE PANEVEZHIS-SHAULIAI AND ELGAVA-RIGA AXES

The 1st Baltic Front's forces consolidated in the positions they had reached, repulsed enemy counterattacks, regrouped for the subsequent offensive, and continued their offensive battles in separate sectors between 15 and 19 July. During this period, the 43d

Army's forces achieved the greatest advance in the direction of Skapishkis. Here, the army's formations succeeded in advancing more than 30 kilometers in the five days, cut the Dvinsk-Panevezhis rail line, and captured the road junction and station of Skapishkis.

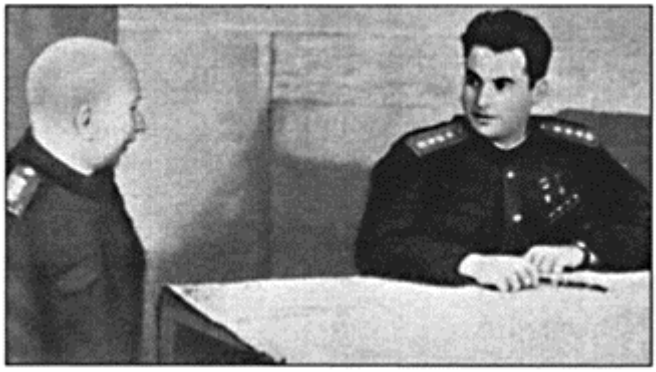
The formations of the 2d Guards and 51st Armies continued their march in the general direction of Panevezhis during this period. Two divisions each from the 2d Guards and 51st Armies were brought forward on the night of 20 July and took over sectors manned by the 43d Army's forces. The 2d Guards and 51st Armies' main forces were committed to combat on subsequent days.

The comparatively weak resistance by the enemy along the Panevezhis-Shauliai axis created rather favorable conditions for the 1st Baltic Front's forces to develop an aggressive offensive to the northwest and reach the Gulf of Riga. The newly committed armies (the 51st and 2d Guards) began to develop an offensive along the Panevezhis-Shauliai axis successfully from the very first day. The greatest success was immediately noted in the 51st Army's offensive sector. Its forces had already captured the important railroad junction and town of Panevezhis by the end of 22 July.

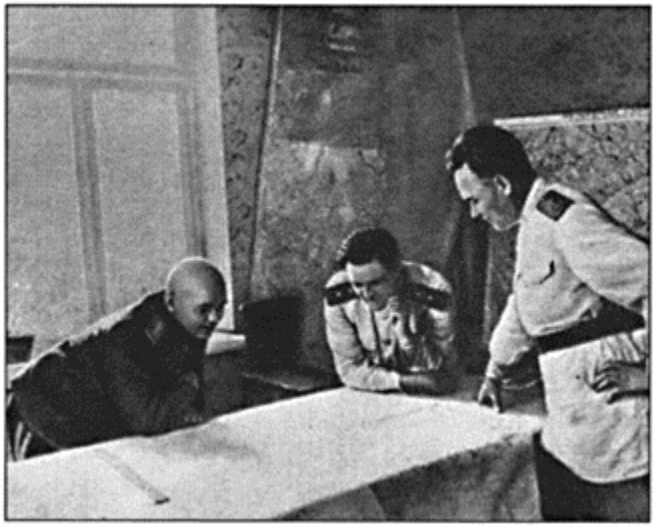
The 6th Guards Army resumed its offensive on 23 July. Resisting army formations fiercely on the approaches to Dvinsk, the enemy slowly withdrew to the northwest. The 2d Baltic Front, cooperating with separate units from the 6th Guards Army, captured Dvinsk by the close of 27 July.

The 3d Guards Stalingrad Mechanized Corps was committed to combat on 26 July in the 51st Army's offensive sector in the general direction of Shauliai. Developing an aggressive offensive, the corps' units advanced up to 70 kilometers on the very first day and cut the Shauliai-Riga railroad line and highway in the Dovgelaitse region and the Shauliai-Lepaia rail line and highway in the Taliotsi region. The 8th Motorized Brigade succeeded in penetrating to the northern outskirts of Shauliai by day's end on 26 July. Exploiting the success achieved by the tank corps, the 51st Army's forward units had also reached Shauliai by 27 July. Also on this day, the units of the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps, in close cooperation with approaching 51st Army units, captured the Lithuanian SSR's *oblast'* center and town of Shauliai by storm after a short battle. During the offensive of 20–27 July, the 51st and 2d Guards Armies achieved the greatest success. The forces of these armies advanced 50–150 kilometers during these eight days

1. Army General I.Kh.Bagramian (left), Commander of the 1st Baltic Front, and Lieutenant-General V.V. Kurasov, *front* Chief of Staff.

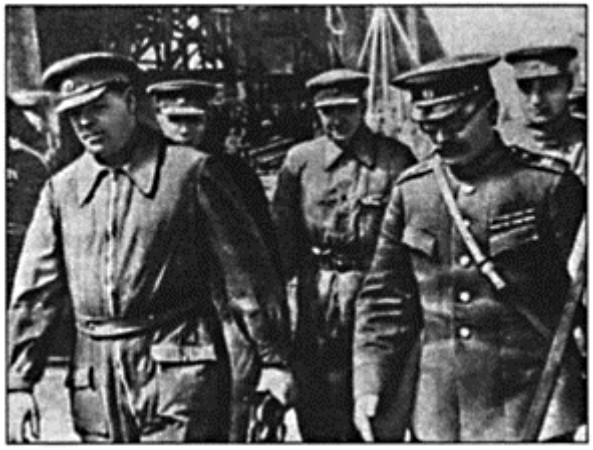


2. Army General I.D.Cherniakhovsky (right), Commander of the 3d Belorussian Front, and Colonel-General A.P. Pokrovsky, *front* Chief of Staff.



3. (From left to right) Army General G.F. Zakharov, Commander of the 2d Belorussian Front, Lieutenant-General N.V.Subbotin, Member of the *front*'s Military Council (Commissar), and Colonel-General of Aviation K.A. Vershin, Commander of the *front*'s air forces.

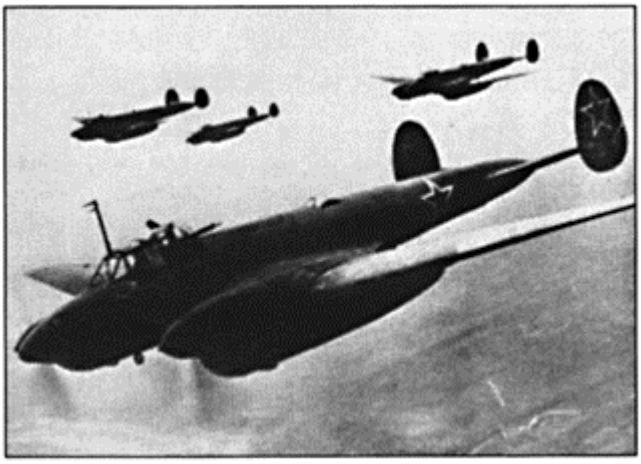
4. Senior command cadre of the 1st Belorussian Front: Major-General I.I.Boikov, Chief of Operations (left), and Army General K.K.Rokossovsky, commander (right); and (in the background) Lieutenant-General M.S. Malanin, Chief of Staff (left), and Lieutenant-General K.F.Telegin, Member of the Military Council (right).



5. Marshal of the Soviet Union A.M. Vasilevsky (left, front), *Stavka* representative, and Marshal of Armored Forces P.A. Rotmistrov (right, front), Commander of the 5th Guards Tank Army.

6. Germans taken captive in Belorussia.

7. Red Army soldiers discuss a tactical problem.



8. Soviet bomber aircraft.

9. Red Army infantry in an assault.

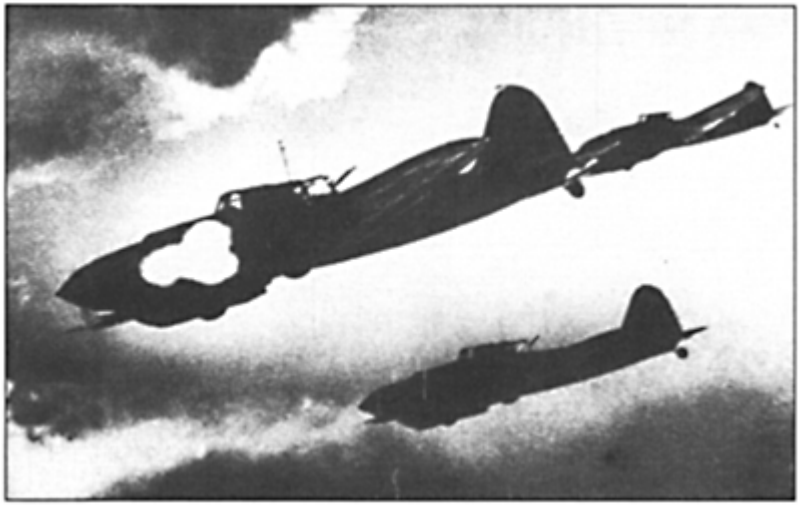
10. Red Army troops crossing the state border into East Prussia.

11. Red Army regimental field guns in direct fire.

12. A T-34 tank in the assault.

13. A Red Army infantry *desant* [assault] on tanks.

14. A Red Army woman sniper circa July 1944.



15. *Shturmovik* assault aircraft in the attack.

16. Red Army infantry on the march.

17. Red Army recruits (Asiatic) taking the soldier’s oath.

18. Artillery firing.

19. Red Army soldiers on the march in Belorussia.

20. Red Army infantry with submachine guns in the assault.

21. A.M.Vasilevsky, Chief of the Red Army General Staff, and Army

General I.D.Cherniakhovsky, Commander of the 3d Belorussian Front (left to right).

22. Red Army troops overlooking a Belorussian city.

23. Red Army 76mm field guns supporting an infantry assault with direct fire.

24. Red Army motorized infantry assault on tanks.

25. Soviet partisans participating in the liberation of Minsk.

26. Germans captured in Belorussia being paraded through Moscow.

27. A grenade and submachine-gun assault.

28. A Soviet propaganda poster,
stating: ‘We will get to Berlin on foot!’

and reached the Krinchinas, Shauliai, and Vidzishki line by the end of 27 July.

Fearing the arrival of the 1st Baltic Front’s forces at Elgava (Mitava) and the Gulf of Riga, as it had done previously, the German command brought reserves forward and launched counterattacks from the regions east of Birzhai, west of Shauliai, and from Suvelishki. After capturing the town of Shauliai, the *front* command undertook measures

to protect its flanks in the Birzhai and Shauliai region soundly, and it directed the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps and the 51st Army's main forces to the Elgava-Riga axis.

The 3d Guards Stalingrad Mechanized Corps, under the command of General-Lieutenant Obukhov, performed admirably during the offensive along this axis. While developing an aggressive offensive, the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps' units were already fighting on the outskirts of Elgava on 28 July. The successful arrival of the 3d Guards Stalingrad Mechanized Corps in the Elgava region created very favorable conditions for further success in the direction of the Gulf of Riga. Consequently, the *front* commander decided that the mechanized corps' main forces would capture Elgava and the 8th Mechanized Brigade would develop the offensive to the northwest to capture Tukmus and cut the Riga-Vindava coastal railroad line.

The battles for Elgava were protracted. The enemy had brought up reserves and was attempting to hold the town at any price. Only when the 51st Army's forces approached on 31 July did our forces manage to break the German resistance and capture the town. The 8th Mechanized Brigade succeeded in covering up to 100 kilometers on 30 July and capturing Tukmus, thereby cutting the last railroad line linking the Germans' Baltic grouping with East Prussia. The brigade's forward detachments reached the coast of the Gulf of Riga in the Kliapkalis region on the same day.

The main efforts of the 1st Baltic Front's forces during the subsequent days of the operation were directed toward repelling intensified enemy counterattacks from the direction of Birzhai and west of Shauliai and toward strongly consolidating the successes achieved by the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps' units.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the 1st Baltic Front's successful operations during 20–31 July created favorable conditions for the encirclement of the Germans' entire Baltic grouping. During this stage of the operation, the decisive and bold operations by the 3d Guards Stalingrad Mechanized Corps, which was the *front*'s main shock force in the offensive against Shauliai and then along the Riga axes, merit special attention. This corps' operations can serve as an excellent model for the employment of tank and mechanized formations in the operational depth of the enemy defense.

3D BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S COMBAT OPERATIONS

The 39th Army once again became a part of the 3d Belorussian Front as of 16 July. In addition, the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps was transferred to the 1st Baltic Front, and the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps was transferred to the 2d Belorussian Front. Army-General Cherniakhovsky assigned his forces the following missions on 16 July:

- The *39th Army* is to continue the offensive with the mission to capture the Neviazhka River line and reach the Kedainiai, Iasvonin, Chekishka, and (excluding) Vil'ki line by the end of 18 July; subsequently, be prepared to attack north of the Neman River in the general direction of Vodzhgiry;
- The *5th Army* is to capture Kaunas while employing extensively an enveloping maneuver from the north and south; at the same time, the army's main forces are to be brought forward to the Vil'ki, Sapezhishchki, and (excluding) Iure Station line; subsequently, be prepared to attack south of the Neman River in the direction of Shakiai and Shillenen;

- The *33d Army*, while exploiting the 5th Army's crossings and bridge-heads, is to commit the first echelon to the Neman River's western bank by the end of 16 July, and launch a decisive offensive on the morning of 17 July with the mission to capture the Iure Station, Vysoka (14 kilometers northeast of Mariiampol'), and Liudvinov line by the end of 18 July; capture Kozlova Ruda Station and the fork in the road ten kilometers south of the station by employing forward detachments. The second echelon is to be at the Neman River line by the end of 17 July;
- The *11th Guards Army*, while continuing its offensive, is to capture the Lake Zhuvinty, Simno, and Lake Dus' line by the close of 17 July; and the (excluding) Liudvinov, Kalvariia, and (excluding) Vidugery line by the end of 18 July; and
- The *31st Army*, having forced the Neman River along the entire extent of your sector, is to regroup on 16 July and capture the (excluding) Seree, Leipuny, Koptsovo (excluding), and Sopotskin line by the end of 17 July.

The *front*'s forces began to execute their assigned missions on 16 July.

Meanwhile, while striving to halt our further offensive, the German command made every effort to hold on to positions along the Sventa and Neman Rivers and to liquidate our bridgeheads along the Neman's western bank. To that end it shifted from other axes and brought up from the depth against the 3d Belorussian Front five new infantry divisions (the 212th, 69th, 131st, 170th, and one infantry division whose numerical designation has not been established), six panzer divisions (the 5th, 6th, 7th, 12th, 'Great Germany', and 'Death's Head'), two infantry brigades (the 765th and 671st), 25 separate regiments and 15 separate infantry and special battalions. The newly committed forces were supported by large air forces.

Intense fighting took place during 16–20 July. The enemy attempted to force our forces back to the Neman's eastern bank by fierce infantry and tank attacks. The Germans exerted the strongest pressure against the 5th Army on the Kaunas axis and against units from the 33d Army and the 11th Guards Army in the *front*'s center sector.

Repulsing enemy attacks, the *front*'s forces continued to advance, and the 5th, 11th Guards, and 31st Armies' main forces and part of the 33d Army's forces fought their way across the Neman River on a front of 105 kilometers by 16 July.

During the course of subsequent combat, the greatest advance was achieved on the *front*'s flanks.

The 39th Army's left flank and center had reached the Sventa River by 20 July, and part of its forces forced the river north of Verpriai.

The 31st Army advanced 2–16 kilometers and reached the line west of Koptsovo and Sopotskin.

On 20 July the *front* commander ordered all of his armies to consolidate their positions along existing lines and to shift temporarily to a stubborn and tough defense in order to inflict maximum losses on the enemy, especially his tanks.

Simultaneously, the armies were to begin to prepare for a subsequent offensive by bringing forward in the shortest possible period equipment, ammunition, and fuel that had lagged behind.

The *front*'s forces conducted heavy defensive battles during 20–28 July, during which enemy forces were exhausted and our tactical situation improved. The Germans lost up to 15,000 soldiers and officers, in dead alone, between 16 and 28 July. During the same period, our forces destroyed 240 German tanks, self-propelled guns, and armored

transports. A total of 172 enemy aircraft were destroyed in air battles, at airfields, and by antiaircraft artillery fire.

The 39th Army's right flank forced the Sventa River on 24 July and captured the large highway center and railroad station of Ukmerge, while advancing up to 14 kilometers to the west.

Simultaneously, the 33d Army captured Preny and considerably widened the bridgehead in the Preny and Bal'verzhishki sector on the Neman River's western bank.

Having suffered enormous losses without achieving any success, the Germans were forced to shift to the defensive after a number of fierce but fruitless attacks.

Having brought up equipment and rear services and replenished their ammunition, our forces once again resumed the offensive on 28 July, and they advanced up to 50 kilometers into the depth in three days of offensive combat, widening the penetration up to 230 kilometers along the front.

During the offensive, the *front*'s forces captured the Lithuanian SSR's administrative center, town, and large railroad station of Mariiampole on 31 July, as well as the important communications centers of Kozlova Ruda Station, Pil'vishki, Shostakovo, Liudvinov, Simno, and Seiny, and captured more than 900 other populated areas.

The 39th Army reached the Neviazhis River.

Having smashed the enemy's stubborn resistance, the 5th Army's forces penetrated into Kaunas and captured the city and fortress on 1 August with help from the 39th and 33d Armies, this being an operationally important communications center and powerful German defensive strong point on the approaches to East Prussia.

Exploiting this success, the *front*'s forces forced the Sheshupa River in several places and approached to within eight-ten kilometers of the East Prussian border in several sectors, having wedged into the forward defense zone of the East Prussian Fortified Region.

2D BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S COMBAT OPERATIONS

Having captured Grodno on 16 July in cooperation with the 3d Belorussian Front, the 2d Belorussian Front reached the Neman and Svisloch' River line, where it encountered intensified enemy resistance.

By this time the Germans had succeeded in assembling five police regiments and three infantry regiments (the 1065th, 1068th, and 1069th) in the region west and southwest of Grodno on the Neman River's left bank, which constituted a combat group. The 3d SS Panzer Division (the 'Death's Head') also assembled after being transferred from Romania. In addition, part of the 50th Infantry Division, which had become threadbare in previous fighting, was employed in this region. Exploiting the marshy flood lands south of the Neman River on the Svisloch' River line, the Germans also attempted to halt our offensive along the Belostok axis and resisted fiercely using all available means. Launching counterattacks in separate sectors using units from the 367th and 50th Infantry Divisions, the 12th Panzer Division, the 28th Light Infantry Division, the 461st Reserve Infantry Division, and various security units and sub-units totaling more than the strength of a division, the Germans made every effort to halt our offensive to the Svisloch' River

and prevent our advance to Belostok, the most important strongpoint and main highway junction on the approaches to East Prussia.

The operational formation of the 2d Belorussian Front's forces had two armies (the 50th and 3d) deployed in first echelon along the Neman and Svisloch' River line by 17 July. At this time, the 49th Army was advancing to the front after a two-day rest and was located 50 kilometers in the depth along the Shchuchin and Zaimishche line. The 3d Guards Cavalry Corps was operating on the right flank.

Battles along the Neman and Svisloch' Rivers

The *front*'s right-flank forces waged fierce battles during the period 17–21 July, but could not advance. The enemy pressed the 69th Rifle Corps' units that had crossed to the Neman River's left bank on 17 July by committing newly arrived units from the 3d Panzer Division into combat southwest of Grodno. The enemy also posed some threats to the 3d Guards Cavalry Corps, which by 21 July had occupied a considerable portion of the Augustow Forests on the river's left bank southwest of Sopotskin. Simultaneously, while encountering fierce enemy resistance south of Grodno on the Neman and Svisloch' River line up to Krynki, the 50th Army repelled the enemy's counterattacks. The Germans contained our forces' offensive during 17–21 July and even pushed our forces back to the east in some locations. Only on the *front*'s left flank did the 3d Army, using three stubbornly fighting corps, overcome German resistance. These corps reached the Krynki, Novoselki, and Oziably line by the end of 21 July, having advanced 15–25 kilometers in four days.

Considering the increased enemy resistance, the *front* command decided to commit the 49th Army at the junction between the 50th and 3d Armies. Having completed a 50-kilometer march from Shuchin to the mouth of the Svisloch' River, the 49th Army assumed control of the 50th Army's 70th Rifle Corps and its sector, and committed the 38th Rifle Corps to the south, where it replaced units from the 3d Army's 35th Corps.

After a regrouping associated with the commitment of the 49th Army's forces to the front, the 2d Belorussian Front's formations continued offensive battles, during which the enemy suffered a serious defeat. These formations had forced the Neman and Svisloch' Rivers along their entire length by the end of 24 July, and, while developing the offensive, two of the 50th Army's rifle corps (the 69th and 81st) had reached the Lipsk and Skomoroshki line. The 3d Guards Cavalry Corps and the 50th Army finally captured the eastern part of the Augustow Forests and the southwestern sector of the Grodno Fortress's defensive works. The 49th Army with the attached 121st Rifle Corps, which had been transferred to it from the 50th Army on 22 July, advanced 20–30 kilometers during 22–24 July and reached the Skomoroshki and Sokulka line by the end of 24 July. The Germans' resistance increased at this position. The enemy launched fierce counterattacks, striving to hold the Grodno-Belostok rail line and highway. The combat for possession of Sokulka, where German units from the 50th Infantry Division and the 19th and 20th Panzer Divisions launched frequent counterattacks, was particularly intense; these points changed hands several times. After three days of stubborn fighting in the forests east of Belostok, during which units from the enemy's 367th Infantry, 28th Light Infantry, and 12th and 14th Panzer Divisions, and the 37th Security and 41st

Cavalry Regiments suffered heavy losses, the 3d Army reached the Zapetski, Vasil'kovo, and Gnetiuki line by the end of 24 July and was fighting on the outskirts of Belostok.

Battles for Belostok and arrival of 2d Belorussian Fronts' forces at the Augustow, Knyshin, and Surazh line

Further developing the offensive during the following three days and having advanced 10–20 kilometers in the direction of Grodno and Osovets, the 2d Belorussian Front had reached the Sidra River line by the end of 27 July. In the *front*'s center, the 49th Army's left-flank 38th Corps and the 3d Army's right-flank 35th Rifle Corps continued to fight fiercely for the Grodno-Belostok railroad line and highway. Advancing only three-five kilometers, they occupied Sokulka and Vasil'kovo. Smashing strong enemy resistance, the 3d Army's 41st and 40th Rifle Corps, operating on the *front*'s left wing south of the Suprasl' River, captured the city and large industrial center of Belostok by storm on 27 July, after two days of fighting. The city was an important railroad center and powerful fortified German defensive region covering the road to Warsaw.

The 2d Belorussian Front's forces advanced 20–30 kilometers along the entire front during the next four days and, while inflicting considerable losses upon the enemy, reached the line of the Augustow Canal south of Augustow, the Bzhozuvka River, and the Narev River south of Knyshin by 31 July.

Two of the 50th Army's rifle corps reached the Augustow Canal and the lower course of the Bzhozuvka River by the end of 31 July, where they continued to fight against opposing German units. Because of the extended front (from Mikashuvka to Bzhozovo was about 70 kilometers), the army did not advance on 31 July.

Having transferred its 38th Corps into the *front* reserve on 28 July, the 49th Army continued the offensive over the next three days. Its forces had reached the Bzhozuvka River in the Bzhozovo and Gura sector by 31 July.

While overcoming the strong enemy resistance west of Belostok, three of the 3d Army's corps advanced 10–20 kilometers during the last four days of July and reached the Narev River's eastern bank in the Gura and Surazh sector by 31 July.

The *front*'s air forces continued to support the *front*'s formations with bombers and ground attack aircraft during the pursuit of the Germans from the Grodno and Svisloch' line to the Augustow Canal and the Bzhozuvka and Narev Rivers; they also reconnoitered the enemy.

The 2d Belorussian Front's combat operations during the second half of July cleared the enemy from the Neman River's left bank, a large part of the Augustow Forests, and the important railroad junction of Belostok, the powerful fortified German defensive region protecting the roads to Warsaw. The enemy suffered heavy personnel and equipment losses during this period. Our forces destroyed more than 30,000 Hitlerites, 120 guns, 130 mortars, 150 tanks, and 31 aircraft, and captured 1,011 prisoners, 72 guns, 20 tanks and self-propelled guns, 40 mortars, and other military property.

The 2d Belorussian Front's forces reached the immediate approaches to East Prussia.

1ST BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S OFFENSIVE TOWARD BREST

On 16 July the 1st Belorussian Front commander issued an order to his forces which assigned them the following missions:

- the *48th Army* is to continue its attack in the general direction of Narev with the mission to capture the town and subsequently advance toward Pleski. The boundary line on the left is up to Dobrovolia, as before, and through Les'na to Pleski;
- the *65th Army* is to continue its attack in the general direction of Gainovka with the mission to capture the (excluding) Gainovka and Vitovo (20 kilometers south of Gainovka) line. Subsequently, advance toward Bel'sk. The boundary line is up to Murava, as before, and further to Kleshcheli;
- the *28th Army* is to continue its aggressive offensive with the mission of employing its right flank to attack in the general direction of Kamenets and to capture the Radoviche and Demianchytse (20 kilometers south of Kamenets) line by the end of 18 July. Subsequently, advance to the Western Bug River north of Brest;
- the *61st Army* is to pursue the enemy in the general direction of Kobrin with the mission to capture the (excluding) Demianchytse and Zhabinka line by the end of 19 July;
- the commander of the *cavalry-mechanized group,* General Pliev, with the 1st Mechanized Corps subordinated to him, is to continue the offensive to the southwest with his main forces (consisting of the 4th Guards Cavalry Corps and the 9th Tank Corps) with the immediate mission to capture the Vidomlia region. Subsequently, exploit the attack in the general direction of Stavy (ten kilometers north of Ianuv Podliaski) and seize Bug River crossings; and
- The *1st Mechanized Corps* is to continue an aggressive offensive to the south with one cavalry division with the mission to cross the Mukhavets River west of Kobrin and cut the enemy's withdrawal routes to the west from the Kobrin region.

Fulfilling the commander's order and without losing contact with the withdrawing enemy, the *front*'s forces accelerated their advance at dawn on 17 July. The 1st Mechanized Corps cut the highway 15 kilometers west of Kobrin on 18 July by means of a powerful attack to the south. Units from the 28th and 61st Armies approached the town from the northeast and east on 19 July. They destroyed the defending remnants of the 102d and 292d Infantry Divisions by a powerful attack from several directions and captured the town and large road junction of Kobrin on 20 July.

Successfully developing its pursuit of the enemy in the general direction of Vidomlia, the cavalry-mechanized group captured this populated area on 18 July. Advancing aggressively, the 30th and 9th Cavalry Divisions' main forces reached the Western Bug River on that same day, while deeply enveloping the enemy's Brest Fortified Region from the northwest.

To the right, having captured the railroad junction of Cheremkha, units from the 65th Army's 18th and 105th Rifle Corps penetrated to the south with their left flank and reached the Western Bug River on 21 July.

The 70th Army on the *front*'s left flank advanced along the Western Bug River's left bank south of Brest in the general direction of Biala Podliaska. Its forward units cut the highway west of Brest on 22 July.

Thus, our forces had already half-encircled Brest and its associated powerful German fortified region on 22 July. All that remained to complete the encirclement was to link the

70th Army up with units from the cavalry-mechanized group in the Ianuv Podliaska region.

The German command undertook every possible measure to hold on to Brest. Thus, the *front*'s forces, which were operating along both sides of the Pripiat' River, were deprived of the opportunity to link up, and the road to Warsaw was blocked to them. The German forces at Brest resisted our advancing formations stubbornly. However, the encirclement ring tightened constantly. The 70th Army's units reached the Western Bug River on a wide front on 25 July by means of a powerful attack from the north. Meanwhile, units from the 28th Army's 128th and 20th Corps had enveloped Brest from the northwest, and, while smashing enemy resistance, units from the 61st Army's 9th Guards Rifle Corps were approaching the city from the east. The encircled enemy garrison, consisting of the 137th, 86th, and 261st Infantry Divisions and a large number of reinforcements, resisted fiercely for three days.

Nevertheless, our forces broke the enemy resistance by a powerful attack from several directions. Having destroyed his forces, our forces stormed and captured Brest, an important communications center and a powerful fortified German defensive region on the Warsaw axis, on 28 July.

Having captured Brest, the 1st Belorussian Front created the necessary conditions for subsequent development of the attack against Warsaw, conditions that our command soon exploited.

RESTORATION OF RAILROAD LINES AND CHANGES IN SUPPLY CONDITIONS

The experience of the Belorussian Operation demonstrates that the tempo of developing [exploiting] an offensive can significantly exceed the rate at which railroads are regenerated. The isolation of the lead railroad stations from the front-line will, in these cases, increase, and the work of motor vehicle transport in the rear areas of advancing armies may become increasingly difficult as a result of the great over-extension of the supply lines. After 25 days of a successful offensive in the Belorussian operation, the extreme lengthening of the rear supply routes made further troop advances more difficult and complex.

At the beginning of the offensive and during the first stage of the operation's development, the forces were based on the following main rail axes:

- the 3d Belorussian Front: Smolensk, Orsha, and Minsk;
- the 2d Belorussian Front: Krichev, Mogilev, and Osipovichi;
- the 1st Belorussian Front: Gomel', Zhlobin, and Osipovichi.

At the beginning of the offensive, each *front* had a directorate for military-restoration work and one or two railroad brigades to restore the rail lines. During the offensive, the composition of the railroad forces increased considerably (up to three or more brigades) in accordance with the importance of the axis and the nature of the restoration work.

The influence of German aviation can be characterized by the following summary data. In all, from 1 June through 10 July 1944, 37 raids took place against railroad stations located within the boundaries of the 1st, 2d, and 3d Belorussian Fronts. The

overall interruption of train traffic resulting from these raids amounted to 155 hours, that is, an average of around four hours after each raid.

The following railroad axes were liberated during the first 7–10 days of the offensive: Smolensk-Orsha-Borisov, Krichev-Mogilev-Osipovichi, and Gomel'-Zhlobin-Osipovichi. Demolished bridges across the Dnepr, Drut', and Berezina Rivers posed particularly difficult problems for the restoration of railroad lines south of Orsha. The first serious obstacle on the

Orsha-Minsk axis arose only in the restoration of the bridge across the Berezina River; therefore, we were able to restore the Orsha-Minsk axis more swiftly than the others. Its role increased in importance, and the 3d and 2d Belorussian Fronts' forces began to be based on the Orsha-Minsk railroad line.

The Germans inflicted their most serious damage in the belt adjacent to the front. They were unable to carry out fully their planned destruction in the subsequent rear terrain belt. In many cases, our aggressive offensive and low-flying aircraft raids against German obstacle work thwarted the enemy's organization of railroad demolition.

The restoration of the Orsha-Minsk and Orsha-Vitebsk sectors in the 3d Belorussian Front's sector was planned for completion by 10 July, and the line from Molodechno to Vilnius was to open by 16 July. In fact, these deadlines were almost met (there was a delay of only one day for the opening of the Molodechno-Vilnius sector). The time for the commencement of rail traffic along restored sectors was determined by the completion of bridge restoration work. Along all of the axes, the restoration of the lines in a sector outstripped the bridge restoration by several days.

Table 13 shows the distance separating the railroad lines being restored from the front-line and the speed of restoration:

TABLE 13. RAILROAD RESTORATION IN THE 3D BELORUSSIAN FRONT'S SECTOR

Sector	*Interval of the restored railroad from the front lines*		*Speed of restoration from the first day of the offensive (km/day)*
	In days after the liberation of the territory	*In distance from the front lines (km)*	
Shukhovtsy-Orsha	3	130	4.1
Shukhovtsy-Orsha-Borisov	8	245	12.5
Orsha-Vitebsk	26	485	6.0
Orsha-Minsk	7	175	14.0
Orsha-Molodechno	6	120	19.0

Orsha-Vilnius	8	80	18.0
Orsha-Kaunas	12	70	12.5
Orsha-Molodechno-Lida	7	130	18.0
Orsha-Molodechno-Lida-Grodno	14	40	15.5

In the operational sectors of the 2d and 1st Belorussian Fronts, the rate of rail restoration was lower than in the 3d Belorussian Front. The planned periods of rail restoration were disrupted because major demolitions delayed our restoration work along the Mogilev-Zhlobin, Bobruisk, and Kalinkovichi-Brest axes. In addition, several of our units were late in arriving at their work location.

Although the rail axes heading toward Osipovichi were liberated rather swiftly, the restoration of the railroad line to the Osipovichi junction was complicated by demolitions carried out by the Germans, especially to bridges across the Dnepr and Berezina.

In light of the delay in the restoration work here, additional forces and equipment were sent to Baranovichi and further west. They were sent to the Baranovichi junction and received the mission to restore the Minsk-Baranovichi sector, the Timkovichi-Baranovichi sector, and subsequently, [the sector] toward Brest. Other railroad troops were re-deployed to the Baranovichi-Belostok sector and to adjacent lines.

The Orsha-Minsk-Baranovichi-Ivantsevichi Station sector remained the principal axis until the end of July; here the rail restoration work outstripped the restoration work on the approaches to this axis. The Osipovichi-Minsk sector opened on 16 July. The Osipovichi-Baranovichi axis was restored by 26 July, that is, within a week after traffic had resumed to Baranovichi along the main axis. Table 14 provides the characteristics of the restoration work in the 2d and 1st Belorussian Fronts' sectors.

TABLE 14. RAILROAD RESTORATION IN THE 2D AND 1ST BELORUSSIAN FRONTS' SECTOR

	Interval of the restored railroad from the front lines		
Sector	*In days after the liberation of the territory*	*In distance from the front lines (km)*	*Speed of restoration from the first day of the offensive (km/day)*
Temnyi Les-Orsha	11	355	3.7
Chausy-	14	380	3.0

Mogilev			
Saltanovka-Zhlobin	14	350	–
Mormal'-Zhlobin	10	290	–
Saltanovka-Osipovichi	15	335	5.2
Saltanovka-Minsk	13	280	9.8
Saltanovka-Osipovichi-Baranovichi	22	211	9.7
Shukhovtsy-Orsha-Minsk-Baranovichi	12	175	14.3
Orsha-Minsk-Baranovichi-Belostok	15	50	10.6
Orsha-Minsk-Brest	3	150	15.5
Ugritsk-Luninets-Baranovichi	19	250	9.8
Ptich'-Luninets-Zhabinka	25	170	7.7

As the railroad lines were restored, the rear service installations of the three Belorussian *fronts* moved their bases forward. The 2d Belorussian Front encountered the greatest difficulty: delays in the restoration of the Mogilev-Baranovichi axis continuously increased the distance between the troops and the railroad line.

The Krichev junction, located 55 kilometers from the front-line, served as the administration station at the jumping-off position. The *front*'s depots were brought closer to the front and located at Khodosy and Veremeika Stations. The advanced depot sections were located at stations that were positioned even closer to the front.

The distance between supply bases and the front-line increased after the offensive began. The force operations to capture Minsk, to encircle and destroy the enemy grouping east of Minsk, and to advance further toward the Neman River proceeded with the rear service area based at railroad stations east of Mogilev. Lupolovo Station was selected on 8 July to be the temporary administration station. The administration station was transferred to Mogilev on 12 July, after the railroad line to Mogilev was restored and the junction developed. Motor vehicle transport was spread out over 300–350 kilometers. The *front* automobile park was tasked with a mission beyond its means, and transport was limited to the delivery of ammunition and fuel.

During the period when the Neman was being forced and the battles for Grodno were being fought, the reduced offensive tempo was exploited to bring unloading stations as

close as possible to the front. The restoration of a trafficable line of commimication for the Belorussian *fronts* (the Orsha-Minsk-Baranovichi road) also helped to improve rear service work. The Osipovichi junction became the administration station on 22 July. The *front* supply base was transferred to Novoel'nia Station, and the stations at Stolbtsy and Gorodzei were developed to unload ammunition and army goods. During the fighting for Belostok, Novoel'nia Station was 150–175 kilometers distant from the front. After capturing Belostok, we were able to transfer the administration station to Baranovichi due to the operational conditions of the restored rail lines. Slonim Station was developed for unloading operations and motor vehicle deliveries were reduced to 150–175 kilometers. Belostok became the administration station after the completion of the 2d Belorussian Front's offensive.

Thus, during the initial period of the operations, the Belorussian *fronts* were primarily based at those railroad stations at which they had been based prior to the offensive. In view of the rapid troop advance, the restoration of rail lines within the boundaries of the sector of fortifications and the adjacent terrain began to lag seriously. A gap began to form between the railroad supply bases and the front-line. This gap increased as the troop advance became more aggressive and as enemy destruction in the frontal sector became more intense. After the restoration of the most seriously damaged lines (usually characteristic of sectors in the jumping-off area adjacent to the front), the tempo of restoration work began to increase sharply. Thus, for example, the restoration of the important rail line from Orsha through Minsk to Baranovichi proceeded with an average tempo of around 14 kilometers per day because of only minor demolitions. The times for the resumption of traffic were basically determined by the readiness of mid-sized and large bridges. Bridges were the most complex and crucial targets for restoration.

The mission of restoration is not simply a matter of arranging passage for a few trains, but rather one of resuming organized rail traffic.

General Conclusions

The Red Army Supreme High Command's plan for the complete defeat of German forces in Belorussia was fully executed.

The Supreme High Commander, Marshal of the Soviet Union Stalin stated in his 7 November 1944 order: 'The Red Army's forces utterly defeated the German forces' central grouping, which consisted of three armies, in the historic engagement on Belorussian lands, having killed and taken prisoner 540,000 German soldiers and officers.'

In its profundity and boldness of concept, care of its preparation, quantity of forces and weaponry engaged, and scope and expertise of implementation, the Belorussian operation represents an outstanding victory for the Red Army in the Great Patriotic War, one of the classic modern operations. Its conduct reflected the artful realization of all of the principal forms of modern maneuver and attack (penetration, exploitation of success by large mobile formations, encirclement, and pursuit).

1. Soviet forces cleared the German-fascist invaders from the vast territory between the Western Dvina and Pripiat', an expanse of more than 400 kilometers from north to south and around 400–500 kilometers from east to west during the 23 days from the beginning of the Red Army's offensive in Belorussia until its arrival at the approaches to Dvinsk, Kaunas, and the front extending from Grodno, west of Volkovysk to Pinsk. The Red Army's offensive did not halt here, but developed further, spreading out over the entire expanded front and into the entire enormous depth.

German Army Group Center, which was located along the Belorussian strategic axis, was routed. German losses during the first month of the Red Army offensive in Belorussia amounted to more than 381,000 killed, 158,480 soldiers and officers taken prisoner (including 22 German generals), 631 aircraft, 2,375 tanks and self-propelled guns, 8,702 guns of varied caliber, 5,695 mortars, 23,071 machine-guns, 57,152 motor vehicles, etc.

The German strategic front was split as a result of the first two stages of the Belorussian operation; an enormous breach of more than 400 kilometers was formed in its center along the most important strategic axis leading to the heart of Germany.

Attempting to close this breach, the Hitlerite command was forced to withdraw more than 30 divisions from other axes and fronts and hurriedly transfer them here. This made our subsequent operations in the Baltics and in the south easier.

The Red Army reached the borders of East Prussia and approached the Vistula as a result of the third stage and subsequent operations. German Army Group North's withdrawal routes from the Baltic were cut, placing it in difficult circumstances. The German southern force grouping was isolated, which facilitated our subsequent operations against it.

Thus, the Belorussian victory contributed to our further successes in the Baltics, Poland, and the Balkans.

Comrade Stalin said in a speech on 6 November 1944:

> The Red Army utterly defeated German forces at Vitebsk, Bobruisk, and Mogilev, and completed its blow by encircling 30 German divisions at Minsk. As a result of this blow, our forces a) completely liberated the Belorussian Soviet Republic; b) reached the Vistula and liberated a considerable part of our ally, Poland; c) reached the Neman and liberated a large part of the Lithuanian Soviet Republic; and d) forced the Neman and approached Germany's borders.

2. The Red Army's offensive in Belorussia is an operation of *strategic significance* and great scope, executed *with close cooperation* among four *fronts* under the leadership of the Supreme High Command. As war experience indicates, the main organizer of this scale of operation was the *Stavka*, and the *fronts*, while developing the offensive along one or two main operational axes, conducted their own operations within the framework of an overall operational-strategic plan.

The length of the front-line at the jumping-off area (from Lake Neshchadro to the Pripiat' River) was around 600 kilometers. In accordance with the operational plan, six powerful blows were delivered along this expanse almost simultaneously, with the aim of penetrating the enemy defense, cleaving his front into separate disconnected pieces, encircling the German forces, and destroying them piecemeal.

The Belorussian operation was characterized by the high tempo of its conduct (an average of 20 kilometers and more per day for three weeks) and the rapid unfolding of major events. In a number of instances, planned tempos were considerably over-fulfilled, an example of this being the operations by the 3d Belorussian Front's forces, which reached the Berezina line three days earlier than planned, and their capture of Minsk earlier than planned. Similar examples can be cited for the operations by the other *fronts*. Thus, this operation was among those displaying the greatest amount of maneuver in the Great Patriotic War, where the force of the attacks and the offensive tempos increased during the troop advance.

The Red Army's forces occupied jumping-off positions east of the Dnepr (between Orsha and Bykhov) on 23 June, while they were already located along the Neman (between Kaunas and Grodno) on 15 July, with part of their force beyond the Neman.

Within the framework of this large operation, a whole series of lesser, fully complete *front* and army operations can be noted (Vitebsk, Bobruisk, Polotsk, etc.), which developed consecutively and followed one another without notable pauses.

The depth of the operations (army and *front*) depended on the overall operational plan, the mission of the given army (*front*), and on how successfully the planned concept was executed. Thus, the depth of the 39th Army's operation at Vitebsk was 30–50 kilometers, while that of the 65th Army at Bobruisk was 70–90 kilometers. The depth of the 5th and 11th Guards Armies' initial operations amounted to 140–160 kilometers. The depth of the 3d and 2d Belorussian Fronts' operations to Minsk was 200–250 kilometers.

Cooperation between the *fronts* was implemented in various ways, depending on the missions and the peculiarities of the situation. Thus, during the first stage we see coordinated attacks by the four *fronts* for the penetration of the enemy defense, the defeat of opposing enemy forces on an enormous 600-kilometer front, together with the closest cooperation (operational and, in some cases, even tactical) between the 1st and 3d Baltic

Fronts with respect to the encirclement and destruction of the Germans' Vitebsk grouping.

During the second stage, operational cooperation between three *fronts* (3d, 2d, and 1st Belorussian) was exceptionally precise because of the concentric offensive along the Minsk axis to encircle and defeat the Germans' Minsk grouping.

Finally, during the third stage, the pursuit of the remnants of the defeated enemy, cooperation bore a more extensive character: *fronts* resolved independent missions along their own axes and in their own operational sectors, thereby operationally assisting one another to achieve a common aim.

3. *Command work* during the Belorussian operation was exceptionally complex and crucial. Having put forth a wise and bold plan as a basis for the operation, our Supreme High Command facilitated its implementation by concentrating the necessary forces and weaponry on the most important axes. During the offensive, the Supreme High Command firmly and skillfully guided the intense struggle, enormous in scale and scope, under conditions of rapidly changing situations, and achieved brilliant successes in the defeat of the enemy's three armies.

The selection of main attack axes, the organization of the offensive by four cooperating *fronts*, the timely concentration and use of operational and strategic reserves, the reinforcement with forces from the depth during the operation, and the defeat of the enemy and ceaseless pursuit of his defeated units and formations over hundreds of kilometers are outstanding models of Soviet and Stalinist military art.

The genius of foresight and wise leadership *[sic]* exhibited by our Supreme Commander-in-Chief and Generalissimo of the Soviet Union, Comrade Stalin, facilitated the achievement of an outstanding victory in the historic battle on Belorussian lands and led to a fundamental change in the situation on the fighting front in favor of the Red Army against the German-fascist invaders.

Marshals of the Soviet Union G.K.Zhukov and A.M.Vasilevsky, *Stavka* of the Supreme High Command representatives, directed *front* operations on the spot, and united and directed their operations in order to best implement the Supreme High Command's plan for the destruction of the Germans in Belorussia. In this crucial and complex work, which produced such brilliant results, they once again exhibited their military talent as outstanding military leaders of the Stalinist school.

The work of the *front* commanders (General Bagramian of the 1st Baltic, General Cherniakhovsky of the 3d Belorussian, General Zakharov of the 2d Belorussian, and Marshal Rokossovsky of the 1st Belorussian) and also the many army commanders clearly attests to the high level of our higher command's operational skill.

During the battles for Belorussia, the Red Army demonstrated increased military expertise, great bravery and rare endurance. Often fighting in difficult conditions of swampy and wooded terrain and in a complex combat situation, and completing long forced marches that involved the overcoming of river obstacles and bold maneuvers, our soldiers were equal to their assigned missions.

In light of the Red Army's brilliant victories achieved on the fields of Belorussia, the defects of German-fascist strategic and operational leadership are especially clear.

Shifting to an assessment of the German command's actions, the major, above-mentioned error made by the Hitlerites in their assessment of the overall strategic situation in the East and of the Red Army's forces should be pointed out from the very

beginning. The German Higher Command thought it possible to repel the Soviet offensive in Belorussia with the forces available to Army Group Center, within the boundaries of their defensive sector, and without permitting an operational penetration or its development.

Nevertheless, the Germans' operational reserves in Belorussia were inadequate, and the penetration of the tactical defense along an extended front threatened them with catastrophe.

It is interesting to recall that, of the 22 panzer divisions that the Germans had on the Eastern Front, 20 were located south of the Pripiat River and only two were north of it.

When the penetration was completed and a wide breach formed, the German command feverishly began to withdraw and transfer divisions from other axes. In view of the great scale of the defeat they had suffered, however, as well as the aggressiveness of the Soviet offensive, the Germans had to commit their transferred forces into battle unit by unit from the march and without necessary preparation. Therefore, they were quickly destroyed in the flames of battle, unable to carry out their assigned missions and halt our offensive.

Thus, the serious errors on the part of the German command were:

- an incorrect assessment of the Red Army's intentions and capabilities;
- inadequate operational reserves, including aviation; and
- the fact that the Belorussian bulge was not promptly straightened; this would have made it possible for the Germans to reduce the front and economize forces.

The German command counted on:

- the durability of their defensive system in Belorussia, which had been created over a long period and included the formation of fortified regions along the most important axes;
- the steadfastness of its forces defending the 'Belorussian balcony'; and
- the possibility of rapid maneuver by operational reserves.

Not one of the above turned out to be true.

4. Every modern operation, especially one on the scale of the Belorussian operation, requires careful and comprehensive *preparation*. Preparation is the foundation of success.

The careful preparation in the center [Moscow], in the *fronts* and in the armies should be noted. In many respects this is very instructive.

Thus, for example, the 1st Baltic Front command regrouped forces in the armies during the preparatory period. The 6th Guards Army was sent from the right flank to the main attack axis. A number of regroupings took place within the 43d Army and, as a result, two rifle corps (the 1st and 60th) were concentrated at the army's right flank (where the main attack was delivered). No less comprehensive work was done in the 3d Belorussian Front as well, associated with the commitment of three rifle corps into the 11th Guards Army's first operational echelon and the creation of shock groups along the Vitebsk-Bogushevsk and Orsha axes. All of the measures associated with the force regrouping were carefully planned and organized and had a very positive effect.

The command and staffs focused particularly great attention on the issue of ensuring covertness of the regroupings that were carried out. As a whole, it should be noted that these missions were successfully fulfilled. The German command was not able to detect

the arrival of the 6th and 11th Guards Armies on their attack axes in a timely fashion. However, the local regroupings conducted by the 1st Baltic Front's 43d Army, such as the concentration of forces on this army's right flank, were successfully detected by German reconnaissance, which is evident from a captured enemy document (intelligence from the IX Army Corps).

The experience of the Patriotic War demonstrates that it is quite difficult to regroup covertly when enemies are in each other's vicinity for a long duration (when not only formations and units occupying the defense in the first line, at junctions, and along flanks are known but also existing routine activities along the forward edge and in the depth). As is evident from this captured document, the expansion of the 204th Rifle Division's defensive sector and the arrival of the 43d Army's 306th Division in the reserve, as well as other indicators (high-burst firing, ranging of higher-caliber guns, etc.) made it possible for the enemy to guess about the operation being prepared. However, thanks only to the fact that the 1st Baltic Front command managed to concentrate the 6th Guards Army secretly, the enemy was unable to determine the scale of the operation being prepared north of Vitebsk based upon detected indicators of the 43d Army's regrouping. The German command assumed that only an attack of a local nature would be conducted north of Vitebsk. As for the 3d Belorussian Front, based upon the experience of our previous operations, the enemy anticipated active operations along the Orsha axes. The concentration of large forces and the preparation of a powerful attack in the direction of Bogushevsk remained undetected.

During the preparatory period for the offensive operation, the *front* and army commands devoted a great deal of attention to the preparation of command cadre at all levels, staff cohesion, and troop training in conditions approximating the actual situation. All of these measures yielded positive results during the offensive.

The experience of preparing the offensive in the 3d and 2d Belorussian Fronts once again confirms the advisability and necessity of providing adequate time for the planned implementation of all preparatory measures. Even before receiving the operational directive from the *Stavka* for the preparation of the operation, the 2d Belorussian Front had been in a stable situation for more than one month and was able to carry out measures to support possible active operations for the upcoming summer. Upon receipt of the directive, the *front* had 22 days for preparation. This period made it possible to prepare carefully for the offensive operation. The *front*'s Military Council approved the operational plan on 10 June and reported it to the army commanders. Thus, the army command had 12 days at its disposal for preparation (on the basis of a concrete decision). The troops and staffs used this time very effectively. Reinforcing formations and units regrouped in a covert and organized fashion. Forces were intensively and purposefully occupied with combat training and the construction of bridgeheads. A great deal of attention was focused on working out problems of cooperation among the forces. At the same time, considering the upcoming forcing of a number of rivers, much work was done on training the forces to overcome water obstacles and on the procurement of crossing means.

The operation as conducted confirmed the great importance of full and careful preparation of the rear area [rear services] for the forthcoming combat operations. A precise supply system and the creation of adequate reserves along the main attack axis in

the immediate vicinity of the front contributed significantly to the successful development of the operation.

The success of the 1st Belorussian Front's Bobruisk operation depended to a great degree on the fact that the command successfully ensured operational surprise. A German prisoner, General Walter, pointed out:

> At the beginning of June, when we found out about the concentration of Russian forces in our front sector, we were at the time more inclined to think that these were holding forces; we did not reckon on the kind of attack we received during the very first days.

Despite possessing some indicators concerning the concentration of our forces along individual axes, the German command incorrectly determined their strength and did not know in which sectors the main attack was to be made. On the contrary, it was misled by a series of false measures and, expecting our attack in the Zhlobin and Rogachev sector, it concentrated its main forces there, which were soon encircled and destroyed east of Bobruisk by powerful attacks from the flanks.

How was operational surprise achieved? Above all, by the fact that, while preparing for the offensive, the forces carefully observed all *maskirovka* [deception] measures. As a rule, the force regrouping in the 1st and 3d Belorussian Fronts, the arrival of forces in their jumping-off positions, and the unloading of arriving troop trains were conducted only at night. Only individual vehicles or small infantry groups were authorized to move towards the front during the day. Tanks and motorized formations were concentrated 30–40 kilometers and more from the front before the beginning of the offensive. Troop *maskirovka* was checked daily from the air by responsible front staff officers and also by General Staff officers, who quickly informed the appropriate formation commanders concerning violations of *maskirovka* discipline by their forces. It was strictly forbidden to talk on the radio or by telephone about preparations for the offensive. From division commanders downward, all instructions were to be given to subordinates only orally. Every day forces carried out defensive work in all sectors where they were deployed, erected wire obstacles before the forward edge, and mined the terrain to mislead the enemy. Pamphlets and instructions published for soldiers on organizing a defense were very important for this purpose. False troop trains with dummy tanks and motor vehicles, infantry columns, and artillery were moved from the front to the rear area daily in accordance with plans of the *front* headquarters. As a rule, reconnaissance was conducted along the entire front; small groups of two-three men conducted commanders' reconnaissance along the main attack axes. Tankers and some other officers of specialized forces were forbidden to appear in their uniforms along the forward edge, etc. These and similar measures proved their value.

5. The *operational penetration* and its exploitation were the basic means of operations by our forces during the first stage. During the preparation and conduct of the penetrations by the armies and fronts, we can observe many procedures familiar to us from previous operations, which had been worked out during the Great Patriotic War and had been enriched by its experience. The Red Army's offensive in Belorussia during the summer of 1944 confirms that the principal requirements for a successful operational penetration are:

- knowledge of the enemy, his defensive system and force groupings, and the capability of his reserves to maneuver;
- appropriate selection of main attack axes and penetration sectors, which makes it possible to execute the operational plan with the best results in the shortest possible time;
- correct determination of the time for launching the offensive;
- covertness of all preparations; measures for operational *maskirovka* and deception of the enemy to ensure operational surprise;
- concentration of large forces on the most important axes and the achievement here of decisive superiority over the enemy in forces and suppression weaponry (artillery, tanks, aviation);
- skillful use of forces and organization of cooperation to the entire depth of the attack; conduct of the offensive at swift tempos; and
- support for the offensive in moral-political, operational, and logistical respects.

In a number of cases, the penetrations carried out by Soviet forces in Belorussia in the summer of 1944 reflect further development of the operational experience of 1943; nevertheless, several [new] features distinguish them. Often the penetrations were made in swampy and forested sectors. This required great skill and specialized training on the part of our forces and the skillful employment by our commanders of large quantities of equipment under unfavorable terrain conditions. The combat actions of reconnaissance sub-units (and of the forward battalions), which were carried out on the eve of the general offensive, were extensively used and played a substantive role. In a number of cases, these actions made it possible to obtain a more precise picture of the German defense, get a feel for weak areas in it, and wedge into the enemy's main defensive belt. In some instances, the reconnaissance detachments (supported by part of the first echelon forces) even succeeded in penetrating the main defensive belt before the commencement of the general offensive.

Thus, in some offensive sectors, at the appointed date and time the main force offensive began straight away with a period of artillery accompaniment of the infantry attack or with support of infantry and tank operations in the enemy's defensive depth, rather than with an artillery and aviation preparation against the Germans' first trenches. In these instances, the combinedarms, artillery, aviation, and other chiefs had to display great flexibility and an ability to alter the existing offensive plan rapidly.

Mobile formations (the tank, mechanized, and cavalry corps, and the tank army) played an important role in the exploitation of penetrations. Experience demonstrates that the principal method for using mobile formations was their commitment into the penetration through a breach made in the German defenses by the combined-arms formations. In the given combat conditions, the presence of a well-developed enemy defense and the attacker's powerful means of suppression, such an operational method is normal. It will best ensure the swift arrival of mobile formations in the operational depths and the preservation of their forces for decisive attacks against the enemy's rear or flanks. On the whole, the 2d Guards Tank, 3d Guards Mechanized, and 3d Guards Cavalry Corps, and the 5th Guards Tank Army were employed in such a fashion during the beginning of the offensive in the 3d Belorussian Front. The 1st Guards Tank, 1st Guards Mechanized, and 4th Guards Cavalry Corps were used in this manner in the 1st Belorussian Front.

The employment of the 9th Tank Corps on the 1st Belorussian Front's right flank was characteristic. Here, as in several operations conducted in 1942–43, the tank corps was used together with combined-arms formations, to 'complete the penetration' of the tactical depth of the German defense, which had already become weakened and shaky as a result of previous attacks northwest of Rogachev. Generally speaking, this operational method is not desirable, because it often results in premature losses in the mobile formations assigned to exploit success in the operational depth, since they arrive there in an already weakened state. Nevertheless, in the given situation this decision to employ the 9th Tank Corps must be deemed correct, since it ensured our enormous success and resulted in the encirclement of the enemy's Bobruisk grouping.

The 3d Belorussian Front's cavalry-mechanized group (the 3d Guards Mechanized Corps and 3d Guards Cavalry Corps) was committed into the penetration behind the rifle formations when the German defense on the Bogushevsk axes had been completely penetrated. This group played an extremely important role in the exploitation of success. Having broken through to operational space, it cut up the enemy forces, separated the Germans' Vitebsk grouping from the Orsha grouping, and, by aggressive operations, supported the capture of the Berezina line earlier than planned.

The 1st Belorussian Front's cavalry-mechanized group (the 1st Guards Mechanized Corps and 4th Guards Cavalry Corps) was committed behind the 1st Guards Tank Corps. This tank corps quickly moved into the penetration after the combined-arms formations had penetrated the enemy's defensive belt, widened it, deepened it up to 20 kilometers, and, by its operations, pinned down German reserves at Parichi that were prepared to counterattack. As a result, General Pliev's cavalry-mechanized group encountered weak resistance and, while maintaining its dense combat formations, quickly reached the operational depth, cutting the enemy's path of withdrawal to the southwest.

In these conditions, the planned penetration sectors for the armies were not large; in a number of instances there were less than ten kilometers for a single army. To increase the power of the attack and the penetration breach, the following procedure was employed: two neighboring armies delivered one general attack with their contiguous flanks and developed it in eccentric [diverging] directions. In addition, powerful attacks were made almost simultaneously along six axes to splinter the entire enemy front (the 1st Baltic Front—one attack; the 3d Belorussian Front—two attacks; the 2d Belorussian Front—one attack; and the 1st Belorussian Front—two attacks). Thus, the German defense in Belorussia was carved into separate pieces by powerful and deep attacks and immediately lost the ability to cooperate. This created the possibility to encircle and destroy the enemy forces piecemeal.

6. The *operational encirclement* was carried out in various ways in accordance with the features of the particular situation. Thus, at Vitebsk we saw an instructive example of the encirclement of five enemy divisions, which was fulfilled by combined-arms formations (with close cooperation between the contiguous flanks of two *fronts*) and without the participation of large mobile formations. This is a comparatively rare occurrence in modern conditions, where the encirclement of a large operational grouping is successfully executed by infantry without the help of mobile forces. The success of this maneuver was made possible by:

- the aggressiveness of the offensive and the skillful actions of our combined-arms formations along enveloping flanks;

• the enveloping nature of the Red Army's front lines at Vitebsk; and
• the slowness of the German command, which delayed its decision to withdraw.

The encirclement at Bobruisk was executed in another fashion: by close cooperation between combined-arms and tank formations. The two tank corps were the first to close the encirclement ring at Bobruisk. Rifle divisions followed them, consolidating the front around the enemy grouping which had been cut off and freeing mobile detachments for deeper missions. Such a method of encirclement is observed more frequently in modern conditions. Our '1943 Draft Field Regulations' express this point of view.

The encirclement of the German forces at Vitebsk and Bobruisk occurred immediately following the penetration of the defensive front and not far from the regions which German forces had occupied as jumping-off positions. The encirclement at Minsk was carried out in altogether different conditions. At the beginning of our offensive, the German Fourth Army's main forces were located east of the Dnepr (east of the Orsha, Mogilev, and Bykhov line), but they were encircled at Minsk, that is, nearly 200 kilometers from their initial positions. In this instance, the encirclement was the result of not only the penetration, but also the *operational pursuit* of the withdrawing enemy grouping. The main feature of this type of encirclement was parallel pursuit, skillfully conducted at swift tempos. The encirclement itself was accomplished by the cooperation between mobile and combined-arms formations.

We can observe the Red Army's increased *maneuver skill* in all of these operations.

A characteristic feature of the concluding stage of the encirclements carried out in Belorussia was the *rapid liquidation* of even large encircled enemy groupings. This was facilitated by:

• skillful operations by our forces, who capably delivered powerful attacks and split the encircled groupings into smaller units; and
• the Red Army's powerful and improved equipment, in particular the use of large aviation formations, which delivered shattering blows against the crowded German forces, accelerating the process of their demoralization and defeat.

The experience of the Bobruisk and Vitebsk operations demonstrated how effectively our aviation could be used to liquidate an encircled enemy. It is known that the German command often attempted to aid its encircled forces and save them from inevitable doom. Therefore, it was necessary to liquidate all remaining centers of enemy resistance in our rear area, even in conditions very favorable for the further development of the offensive and pursuit. If these centers of enemy resistance were encircled at short depths and were densely manned by enemy forces (as was the case in the Bobruisk region), it was necessary to use aviation quickly and destroy them with a powerful air attack. This does not mean, however, that the pressure on an encircled enemy from the ground could be eased. On the contrary, the encirclement ring had to be surrounded by infantry, artillery, and mortars. On those axes where the enemy attempted to break out of encirclement by using his tanks, it was necessary to have a powerful antitank reserve.

It is expedient to employ an air attack:

• immediately following the completion of the encirclement to prevent the enemy from digging in and sheltering himself against losses; and
• only after our infantry and other ground units have precisely indicated their position.

Our ground and air units fulfilled these requirements in the Bobruisk and Vitebsk operations and, therefore, achieved great success. The enemy suffered heavy losses in a short period, and was soon forced to cease resistance.

7. The Belorussian operation is very instructive with respect to conducting an *operational pursuit* of the remnants of a defeated enemy to a great depth. This pursuit and the results achieved were illuminated sufficiently in the preceding exposition. Pursuit was conducted at rapid tempos and along an extensive front, and enemy strong points and centers of resistance were enveloped without prolonged battles.

Each time, we allocated the necessary quantity of forces for the liquidation of encircled groupings, and the main forces in these regions aggressively advanced without delays, while pursuing the remnants of the withdrawing enemy. This permitted the achievement of high offensive tempos, quickly gained space, and denied the enemy time to create a defense at intermediate positions.

The conduct of *parallel pursuit* by the internal flanks of the 3d and 1st Belorussian Fronts during the Minsk operation is of interest. The German Fourth Army was withdrawing along the Mogilev and Minsk axis, while consecutively withdrawing beyond the Dnepr, Drut', and Berezina Rivers, and further to the west.

The army was not able to linger at intermediate positions, since the 3d and 1st Belorussian Fronts' aggressively advancing forces were enveloping it from both flanks. It was also not able to retreat swiftly back to Minsk, since its divisions were being subjected to energetic attacks from the front by the 2d Belorussian Front, whose forces were pinning the enemy down by penetrating between the German formations and splintering their front and were destroying them piecemeal.

While the German grouping that was withdrawing in conditions of the Berezina woodlands covered around 100 kilometers from 29 June–3 July, our flank groupings covered 150 and more kilometers during the very same period. They outdistanced the enemy and reached his lines of communication. In an operational maneuver that developed continuously during the offensive operation, we outstripped the Germans and promptly closed the encirclement ring at Minsk.

Let us dwell on the example of the pursuit conducted by the 1st Belorussian Front. Having penetrated the defense, our forces shifted swiftly to an aggressive pursuit, not ending it until the end of July. They penetrated 500 kilometers into the enemy's dispositions and captured Brest. This was achieved because our mobile formations pursued the withdrawing German forces without engaging in protracted battles, swiftly enveloped strong points, and continued to split the enemy's defense by means of powerful attacks along several axes.

Having completed the encirclement of the large grouping of German-fascist forces in the Bobruisk region, the *front* commander left a third of his forces (the 48th Army and the 65th Army's 105th Corps) to destroy it, and he dispatched the other two-thirds to pursue the enemy to Minsk and Baranovichi. The 1st Guards Tank Corps had already reached Minsk on 3 July, and the cavalry-mechanized group engaged in battles on the approaches to Baranovichi on 4 July. This aggressiveness in pursuit not only prevented the enemy from aiding his encircled forces in the Bobruisk region but also denied him the possibility of organizing serious resistance in the depth, using reserves that were being brought forward.

The pursuit by forces from all of the *fronts* was conducted on a broad front, which deprived the German command of the possibility of using reserves that were arriving from the depth along any single axis. In this case, the mobile formations on the flanks advanced echeloned somewhat forward with respect to the combined-arms formations advancing in the center. This created favorable conditions during the pursuit to envelop and encircle separate enemy centers of resistance. In the Baranovichi region, for example, while the main forces were engaged in stubborn fighting on the eastern approaches, the city had already been deeply enveloped from the north by the 4th Guards Cavalry Corps' divisions and from the south by the 1st Mechanized Corps. The enemy had fallen into a difficult situation and was forced to cease resisting and abandon the city.

Minsk's fate was predetermined by the fact that, while aggressively pursuing the withdrawing enemy and deeply enveloping the city from the north and south, by 2 July the 3d and 1st Belorussian Fronts' mobile formations had already severed the enemy Minsk grouping's main lines of communication to Vilnius and Baranovichi.

Our mobile formations often exploited main highways for pursuit in view of the fact that German forces in the depth offered only weak resistance. This made it possible for them to increase their tempos of advance and decisively reach the parallel routes of enemy withdrawal, and facilitated considerably the resupply of fuel and ammunition. Pursuit along good roads, however, was not always successful. While withdrawing, the enemy usually resisted along the roads, blew up crossings, spoiled trafficable sections, and laid a large quantity of mines. As a result, the forward units were forced to stop frequently and suffered substantive losses, especially in matériel. Therefore, when terrain conditions permitted, part of the forces was necessarily sent along roads running parallel to the principal highway.

As a rule, the armies in the 3d Belorussian Front carried out pursuit along two axes. One rifle corps operated on each axis, but the force grouping on the axes was not identical. It changed depending on the situation. The creation of the main grouping on this or that axis was always subject to the idea of the rapid defeat of the withdrawing enemy. Thus, for example, during the 11th Guards Army's pursuit of the Germans along the Minsk highway, the combat formation was structured with two rifle and one tank corps, a tank brigade, two tank regiments, and 80 per cent of all artillery in the first echelon and a rifle corps and 20 per cent of artillery in the second echelon.

The left flank delivered the main attack using a rifle corps, a tank corps (the 2d Guards Tank Corps), and a tank brigade (or a tank regiment and two-thirds of the available artillery). The corps, which was operating in the first echelon on the right flank, delivered the secondary attack. The second echelon followed behind the main force on the internal left flank, protecting them against enemy flank attacks from the south. When the 11th Guards Army arrived beyond the Berezina, and when it appeared likely that the Germans would be caught in the Minsk pocket, the 11th Guards Army's main forces relocated to the right flank. This achieved a deep envelopment of the enemy from the north and a rapid arrival at his lines of communication.

The widespread employment of mobile forward detachments in corps and armies had great importance for successful pursuit. These detachments often penetrated through enemy march and combat formations, reached his rear areas, captured important road junctions and crossings, and held them until our main forces arrived.

The troops had to force a series of water lines during the pursuit. In light of the fact that the pontoon and bridge units lagged behind during the rapid advance, the use of on-hand means (rafts, fishing boats, fuel barrels, logs, etc.) was particularly important for crossing infantry and light cargoes. In many instances, a successful crossing of water lines was ensured only by swift actions. The operations by the 3d Belorussian Front's 3d Guards Mechanized Corps and 5th Army at the Berezina River and the 11th Guards Army's forcing of the Neman River can serve as examples of such actions that produced enormous success.

On the whole, the final stage of the Belorussian operation is an extremely instructive example of operational pursuit conducted with a high degree of skill to a great depth and with extensive use of maneuver. Here we observe the full exploitation of an achieved victory.

8. The *correlation of forces in the air* changed sharply in our favor in comparison with the operations of previous years. Our powerful aviation dominated over the battlefields in Belorussia in the summer of 1944. German aviation basically appeared on a limited scale. The number of aircraft sorties characterizing air activity on both sides has been cited many times in this work.

For the most part, the favorable air conditions facilitated the conduct of operations by ground forces and contributed to our victories. Freed from pressure on the part of enemy aviation, Soviet forces were able to execute their bold maneuvers completely. On the other hand, the dominance of our aviation in the skies and its powerful attacks against German forces made it very difficult for them to conduct combat operations.

This important influence of the air situation should be kept in mind in order to have a correct understanding of the overall course of combat operations in Belorussia.

However, air operations were not equally distributed throughout the course of the entire operation: the intensity of air operations varied during different periods. Our aviation was particularly active during the first stage of the operation and sharply declined thereafter. Together with considerations regarding the operational formation, interruptions in the delivery of aviation fuel played an important role. Let us cite, for example, some data concerning the 3d Air Army. Thus, night bombers and ground-attack aircraft alone conducted 472–759 aircraft sorties daily during the period from 23–27 June. Beginning with 5 July (as a result of considerable interruptions in fuel support), our air activity had already declined sharply, especially for ground-attack aircraft, which conducted between 7 and 36 aircraft sorties daily during 6–15 July. This decline in our air activity negatively affected the development of the operation, especially along the Dvinsk axis, where enemy resistance increased considerably during this period. Taking advantage of our decreased air activity (especially that of ground-attack aircraft), the enemy brought up reserves to the region southeast of Dvinsk without hindrance, regrouped along the front, and increased his own air activity.

9. By the beginning of the operation, our forces had been supplied with *matériel and equipment*. Large quantities of all types of ammunition, fuel, food and forage, and other necessary reserves for the forces were brought forward to army and *front* storage depots and bases. The appropriate numbers were cited at the beginning of this study.

Ammunition expenditure differed on various axes. Thus, where battles took on a prolonged and stubborn character, the expenditure increased correspondingly. On the

other hand, along those axes where enemy resistance was swiftly broken and the operation developed at rapid tempos, ammunition expenditure sharply declined.

To illustrate, let us cite data for the 1st Baltic Front.

As a result of the successful operations by reconnaissance sub-units on 22 June (especially in the 6th Guards Army's offensive sector) and the aggressive advance of forces on subsequent days, ammunition brought forward to the firing positions and divisional exchange points was not used up.

Table 15 shows the ammunition expenditure for the 6th Guards Army:

TABLE 15. THE 6TH GUARDS ARMY'S AMMUNITION EXPENDITURES

The 6th Guards Army	
Overall quantity of ammunition planned for the operation	From 4 to 5 combat loads
Ammunition on hand on 22 June	From 2.5 to 4 combat loads
Planned ammunition expenditure on the first day of the operation	From 2 to 2.5 combat loads
Actual ammunition expenditure on the first day of the operation	From 0.3 to 0.5 combat loads
Overall ammunition expenditure between 22 June and 25 July	From 2 to 3.5 combat loads

As is evident from the table, a sufficient quantity of ammunition was brought up before the beginning of the offensive, which was enough to support more than a month of the successfully developing operation. Sections from the armies' storage depots were consecutively brought forward in order to support the rapidly advancing forces with ammunition. Thus, depots were organized consecutively in the 6th Guards Army, at Lovsha, Ulla, Vetrino, and Pogost-Novy. This system of the 'leap-frog' movement of army storage depot sections made it possible to support forces with ammunition to the entire depth of the operation.

The rapid advance of forces along the Lepel' and then S'ventsiany axes led to a considerable over-extension of the rear service areas and the lengthening of supply routes. Thus, for example, by 10 July, when the 43d Army had already reached the Lake Drissa, Ignalino, and Nove S'ventsiany line, the supply route stretched as much as 400 kilometers (from its main supply base in Prudok). With the lines of communication so stretched out, shortcomings in motor vehicle transport were sharply felt.

To provide the rapidly advancing forces with all necessities, decisive measures were undertaken to mobilize motor vehicle and cart transport and take best advantage of it. For example, the 43d Army was forced to resort to transporting divisional artillery by horse, and, having freed-up motor vehicles to transport cargoes, to create motor vehicle supply groups from divisional motor transport, mobilize local cart transport, organize a cart battalion with 1,000 carts, and exploit captured motor vehicles more extensively.

Considerable difficulties also arose during the operation in connection with providing forces and rear service areas with POL (petroleum, oil, and lubricants) products. Fuel reserves continuously declined, and by 14 July the 43d Army had only a total of 0.5

gasoline refuelings and 0.2 motor oil refuelings. This led to interruptions in motor-vehicle transport and in the resupply of the armies with ammunition.

To a greater or lesser degree, other armies and fronts experienced similar difficulties with supplies during the third stage of the operation because of the great offensive depth and the over-extension of the rear service areas, particularly when our forces reached the Neman River.

The restoration of the railroads following the attacking forces of the 1st, 2d, and 3d Belorussian Fronts and the changes in the supply situation during the course of the operation were discussed at the end of chapter 6.

10. The great concentration of forces, the mass quantities and variety of equipment, and the rapid offensive tempo to a great depth resulted in great demands on *troop command and control*.

The meetings conducted by unit and formation commanders and their staffs during the preparatory period and also the series of issued orders and instructions on troop control played a positive role. [Our forces] implemented continuous command and control, organized cooperation, and ensured successful execution of assigned missions thanks to the effective organization of command and control, the rapid relocation of headquarters following the advancing forces, the flexible use of all communications means, and the precise and timely issuance of instructions by *front* and army staffs.

The great scope of the operation, the rapidly changing situation, and the increased difficulties in supplying the advancing forces with ammunition, fuel, and food and forage required keen operational skills in troop command and control in order to maintain the high offensive tempos. The *fronts*' staffs carried out command and control during the operation by means of brief encoded orders and combat instructions sent to the armies. Unit telephones were also used extensively. During specific stages of the operation, representatives from the *fronts*' headquarters—responsible senior officers with radio communications means—were sent to the tank and mechanized corps headquarters. These representatives accompanied the corps during their active operations, and their powerful radio means were often the sole channel of communications with the *fronts*' headquarters.

At times, the rapid tempo of the forces' advance required the rapid shift of a command post to bring it closer to the operating forces. Thus, for example, the 1st Baltic Front headquarters changed its command post six times during the month of 23 June–23 July. Sometimes, these changes of command posts occurred even more frequently in the armies. Thus, the 43d Army's forces advanced about 450 kilometers during the operation, and the army's headquarters changed its command post 19 times.

The average distance between the command posts of the armies' headquarters and the forces ranged from 20 to 30 kilometers during the pursuit.

Wire, radio, and mobile means provided communications between the *fronts*' headquarters and the armies. Because of the rapid advance and the frequent relocation of command posts, it was not always possible to establish permanent lines of communication.

Communications means in the 3d Belorussian Front's *front* and army headquarters were set up on specially equipped motor vehicles (including *ST* and *Bodo* instruments [wartime telephone apparatus]) in order to avoid the expenditure of time during

redeployments. These could operate directly from the motor vehicles. This measure turned out to be very effective in maintaining continuous command and control.

The maintenance of communications with the rear services was a weak spot during the operation, since the over-extension of the lines of communication reached 300–400 kilometers in some armies. The maintenance of continuous communications at such distances required enormous efforts and additional equipment.

It should be noted that, even in such difficult conditions, the headquarters at all levels successfully coped with troop command and control. The Po-2 communications aircraft provided invaluable service. This communications means was very maneuverable and operated reliably in all stages of the operation under any conditions.

Characteristic terrain conditions in the 1st Belorussian Front's sector affected the organization of command and control. The extensive flood lands of the Pripiat' River divided the *front* operational sector into two independent parts. This circumstance was reflected in the fact that, in addition to the main command post, an auxiliary command and control post was created north of the Pripiat' River, where the *front* commander had arrived and where one of his deputies was permanently located.

In the 3d Belorussian Front, an operational group (the first echelon of the *front*'s field headquarters) was set up under the *front* commander. It consisted of the chief of the *front*'s operations directorate with five officers from the operations directorate and with appropriate representatives from other staff directorates and the combat arms commanders. This operational group maintained continuous communications with both the forces and the main headquarters echelon.

Wire communications were not often employed in view of the fact that the offensive developed very rapidly. The main types of communications were radio and mobile means, and mainly Po-2 aircraft.

The *front* commander carried out troop command and control by issuing personal combat orders and instructions, which were usually transmitted to the armies in code over military unit telephones. The most important of these were duplicated through communications officers.

Representatives from the *front*'s operations directorate, and aviation, and artillery staff were located in each mobile formation, and they had at their disposal necessary movement and communications equipment.

Personal contact (when conditions permitted) between the *front* commander and his subordinate commanders, and the appearance of command representatives in the forces and subordinate headquarters played an important role during the operation.

In conclusion, this section should also mention the already noted *strengthening [intensification] of forces and means [weaponry]* during the offensive [used] for the resolution of important missions. Let us take the 1st Baltic Front as an example.

Table 16 below shows the sequence of intensification of forces by our command and by the enemy. The continuous influx of new divisions made it easier for the *front* and army commands to maintain absolute superiority in forces over the enemy during all stages of the operation.

While the 1st Baltic Front command had 18 rifle divisions on its attack axis at the beginning of the operation, the number of divisions had increased to 26 (including eight in the second echelons of the 4th Shock and 43d Armies) by the end of the first stage of the operation (28 June). This was because of the freeing up of forces after the destruction

of the Vitebsk grouping and the arrival of the 100th Rifle Corps. By 5 July, when the *front*'s forces were assigned a new mission to reach the Dvinsk, Nove-S'ventsiany, and Podborodze line, the number of rifle divisions reached 27 (including two in the 43d Army's second echelon and seven divisions in the approaching 39th Army).

By 14 July, when the *front* was assigned the mission to develop its principal efforts along the Ponevezhis-Shauliai axis, there were already 38 rifle divisions in the *front* (the 2d Guards and 51st Armies, consisting of 18 rifle divisions, were approaching).

As is evident from this table, another 15 rifle divisions (in addition to the

TABLE 16. THE STRENGTHENING OF FORCES AND WEAPONRY DURING THE OPERATION WITHIN THE 1ST BALTIC FRONT

Number of enemy divisions	*Sequence of the commitment of enemy reserves*	*Date*	*Sequence of the commitment of corps and army second echelons and* front *reserves*	*Total number of our divisions*
1	95th Infantry Division units	23 June	29th Rifle Division	1
1	290th Infantry Division	24 June	270th Rifle Division	1
1	201st Security Division units	25 June	46th Guards Rifle Division	1
1	221st Security Division units	26 June	166th and 357th Rifle Divisions	2
–	—	27 June	154th Rifle Division	1
–	—	28 June	60th Rifle Corps (334th, 335th Rifle Divisions)	2
–	81st Infantry Division	29 June	156th Rifle Division	1
2	281st Security and	30 June	9th Guards and 119th	2

	212th Infantry Divisions		Rifle Divisions	
–	–	1 July	100th Rifle Corps (21st Guards, 28th, 200th Rifle Divisions), 16th Lithuanian Rifle Division, 204th Rifle Division	5
–	–	2 July	332d Rifle Division	1
1	132d Infantry Division	3 July	–	–
1	215th Infantry Division	4 July	–	–
1	218th Field Training Infantry Division	5 July	–	–
–	–	9 July	91st Guards, 19th Guards, 158th Rifle Divisions (39th Army)	3
1	225th Infantry Division	10 July	262d Rifle Division (39th Army)	1
–	–	11 July	251st Rifle Division (39th Army)	
1	61st Infantry Division	12 July	–	–
–	–	13 July	164th Rifle Division (39th Army)	1
1	205th Infantry Division	15 July	–	–
12[a]	–	–	–	23

Note:[a] This table does not take into account the separate regiments, battalions, or other specialized enemy units and sub-units, which were committed into battle as they approached.

eight divisions located in the corps and army second echelons) were committed from 23 June to 13 July alone during the successful offensive. Of these, nine came to the *front* from the 39th Army and the 100th Rifle Corps, two divisions resulted from the regrouping conducted in the 4th Shock Army, and four came from the 60th and 92d Rifle Corps, which were freed up after the liquidation of the Vitebsk grouping.

From this table it can also be seen that in 21 days (23 June–13 July) the 1st Baltic Front succeeded in committing 23 divisions.[1] During the same 23 days, the German command committed only 12 infantry divisions.

Thus, the continuous strengthening of forces on the most important axes by regroupings and an influx from the depth had a great effect on the scope and tempos of the operation.

The high political and moral state of the forces, their confidence in success, and the enormous heroism and bravery of the soldiers and commanders ensured the brilliant victory of Soviet arms in the historic battle on Belorussian lands.

Here, together with the increased skill of forces and their technical outfitting, we can observe several new features of modern operations appropriate for that stage of the war.

The victory gained by the Red Army in Belorussia is an outstanding example of Stalinist military art.

NOTE

1. This does not take into account the 103d, 22d Guards, and 23d Guards Corps, which were transferred from the Polotsk axis to the Dvinsk axis during the battles.

Appendix 1
Soviet order of battle, and unit and formation command cadre, 23 June 1944

1ST BALTIC FRONT
CO: Army General I.Kh.Bagramian
CS: Lieutenant-General V.V.Kurasov
Commissar: Lieutenant-General D.S.Leonov

4th Shock Army
CO: Lieutenant-General P.F.Malyshev
Commissar: Major-General T.Ia.Belik
CS: Major-General A.I.Kudrianov
83d Rifle Corps:
119th Rifle Division
332d Rifle Division
360th Rifle Division
16th Rifle Division (Latvian)
101st Rifle Brigade
171st Sep. Tank Battalion
60th Sep. Armored Train
138th Gun Artillery Brigade
587th Antitank Artillery [Tank Destroyer] Regiment
556th Mortar Regiment
1624th Antiaircraft Regiment
2d Engineer-Sapper Brigade

6th Guards Army
CO: Lieutenant-General I.M.Chistiakov
Commissar: Major-General K.K.Abramov
CS: Major-General V.A.Pen'kovsky
2d Guards Rifle Corps:
9th Guards Rifle Division
46th Guards Rifle Division
166th Rifle Division
22d Guards Rifle Corps:
90th Guards Rifle Division
47th Rifle Division
51st Rifle Division
23d Guards Rifle Corps:

51st Guards Rifle Division
67th Guards Rifle Division
71st Guards Rifle Division
103d Rifle Corps:
29th Rifle Division
270th Rifle Division
34th Guards Tank Brigade
143d Tank Brigade
2d Guards Tank Regiment
47th Tank Regiment
333d Guards Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
335th Guards Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
8th Guards Gun Artillery Division:
26th Guards Gun Artillery Brigade
27th Guards Gun Artillery Brigade
21st Artillery Penetration Division:
103d High-powered Howitzer Artillery Brigade
64th Heavy Howitzer Artillery Brigade
94th Heavy Howitzer Artillery Brigade
55th Howitzer Artillery Brigade
66th Light Artillery Brigade
25th Mortar Brigade
4th Gun Artillery Brigade
45th Antitank Artillery Brigade
64th Howitzer Artillery Brigade
283d Howitzer Artillery Brigade
38th Guards Corps Artillery Regiment
496th Antitank Regiment
295th Mortar Regiment
408th Mortar Regiment
2d Guards-Mortar Division:
20th Guards-Mortar Brigade
26th Guards-Mortar Brigade
22d Guards-Mortar Regiment
99th Guards-Mortar Regiment
39th Antiaircraft Artillery Division:
1406th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1410th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1414th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1526th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
46th Antiaircraft Artillery Division:
609th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
617th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
618th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
717th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1487th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment

10th Assault Engineer-Sapper Brigade
29th Engineer-Sapper Brigade
37th Pontoon-Bridge Battalion
91st Pontoon-Bridge Battalion
106th Pontoon-Bridge Battalion
35th Flame[-thrower] Battalion

43d Army
CO: Lieutenant-General A.P.Beloborodov
Commissar: Major-General S.I.Shabalov
CS: Major-General F.F.Maslennikov
1st Rifle Corps:
179th Rifle Division
306th Rifle Division
357th Rifle Division
60th Rifle Corps:
235th Rifle Division
334th Rifle Division
92d Rifle Corps:
145th Rifle Division
204th Rifle Division
156th Rifle Division
155th Fortified Region
10th Guards Tank Brigade
39th Guards Tank Brigade
105th Tank Regiment
377th Guards Heavy Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1203d Heavy Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
44th Separate Armored Train
28th Guards Gun Artillery Brigade (8th Guards Gun Artillery Division)
37th Guards Gun Artillery Brigade
17th Antitank Artillery Brigade
376th Howitzer Artillery Regiment
480th Howitzer Artillery Regiment
1224th Howitzer Artillery Regiment
759th Antitank Artillery Regiment
31st Mortar Brigade
118th Mortar Regiment
17th Guards-Mortar Brigade (2d Guards-Mortar Division)
39th Guards-Mortar Regiment
17th Antiaircraft Artillery Division:
1267th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1276th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1279th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
2014th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
246th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment

1626th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
221st Sep. Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion
28th Army Engineer-Sapper Brigade
5th Assault Engineer-Sapper Brigade
273d Sep. Sentry Battalion
312th Sep. Sentry Battalion
106th Pontoon-Bridge Battalion
44th Flame-thrower Battalion

3d Air Army
CO: Lieutenant-General of Aviation N.F.Papivin
Commissar: Major-General of Aviation N.P.Babak
CS: Major-General N.P.Dagaev
11th Fighter Aviation Corps:
5th Guards Fighter Aviation Division
190th Fighter Aviation Division
314th Fighter-Bomber Aviation Division
211th Assault Aviation Division
332d Assault Aviation Division
335th Assault Aviation Division
6th Guards Assault Aviation Regiment
259th Fighter Aviation Division
11th Reconnaissance Aviation Regiment
206th Corrective Reconnaissance Aviation Regiment
763d Transport Aviation Regiment
1556th Antiaircraft Regiment
1557th Antiaircraft Regiment
1558th Antiaircraft Regiment

Front subordination
154th Rifle Division:
1st Tank Corps: Lieutenant-General of Tank Forces V.V.Butkov
89th Tank Brigade
117th Tank Brigade
159th Tank Brigade
44th Motorized Rifle Brigade
1437th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1514th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
108th Mortar Regiment
10th Guards-Mortar Battalion
86th Motorcycle Battalion
1720th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
46th Sep. Mechanized Brigade
119th Tank Regiment
272d Motorized Battalion (amphibious vehicles)
26th Guards-Mortar Regiment

34th Guards-Mortar Regiment:
601st Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1623d Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1625th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1714th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
183d Sep. Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion
622d Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion
5th Guards Mine Engineer Brigade
5th Assault Engineer-Sapper Brigade
37th Sep. Engineer-Sapper Battalion (mine clearing dogs)
9th Pontoon-Bridge Brigade
21st Construction Directorate
4th Front Construction Directorate
4th Maskirovka [Camouflage] Company

3D BELORUSSIAN FRONT

CO: Colonel-General I.D.Cherniakhovsky
CS: Lieutenant-General A.P.Pokrovsky
Commissar: Lieutenant-General V.E.Makarov

11th Guards Army
CO: Lieutenant-General K.I.Galitsky
Commissar: Major-General P.H.Kulikov
CS: Major-General I.I.Semenov
8th Guards Rifle Corps:
5th Guards Rifle Division
26th Guards Rifle Division
83d Guards Rifle Division
16th Guards Rifle Corps:
1st Guards Rifle Division
11th Guards Rifle Division
31st Guards Rifle Division
36th Guards Rifle Corps:
16th Guards Rifle Division
18th Guards Rifle Division
84th Guards Rifle Division
152d Fortified Region
2d Guards Tank Corps: Major-General of Tank Forces A.S.Burdeinyi
4th Guards Tank Brigade
25th Guards Tank Brigade
26th Guards Tank Brigade
4th Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade
401st Guards Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1500th Guards Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
273d Mortar Regiment

28th Guards-Mortar Battalion
79th Motorcycle Battalion
1695th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
120th Sep. Tank Brigade
35th Guards Heavy Tank Regiment
63d Guards Heavy Tank Regiment
148th Tank Regiment
517th Tank Regiment (flame and minesweeping)
345th Guards Heavy Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
348th Guards Heavy Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1435th Heavy Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
117th High-power Howitzer Artillery Brigade
149th Gun Artillery Brigade
1st Guards Antitank Artillery Brigade
7th Guards-Mortar Division:
11th Guards-Mortar Brigade
24th Guards-Mortar Brigade
523d Corps Artillery Regiment
1093d Corps Artillery Regiment
1165th Corps Artillery Regiment
551st Antitank Artillery Regiment
545th Mortar Regiment
42d Guards-Mortar Regiment
67th Guards-Mortar Regiment
317th Guards-Mortar Regiment
226th Sep. Special-power Artillery Battalion
245th Sep. Special-power Artillery Battalion
316th Sep. Special-power Artillery Battalion
402d Sep. Gun Artillery Division
406th Sep. Gun Artillery Division
34th Antiaircraft Artillery Division:
1379th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1383d Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1389th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1395th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
48th Antiaircraft Artillery Division:
231st Guards Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1277th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1278th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
2011th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1280th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
2d Guards Assault Engineer-Sapper Brigade
66th Engineer-Sapper Brigade
517th Flame-thrower Regiment

5th Army

CO: Lieutenant-General N.I.Krylov
Commissar: Major-General I.M.Ponomarov
CS: Major-General N.Ia. Prikhid'ko
45th Rifle Corps:
159th Rifle Division
184th Rifle Division
338th Rifle Division
65th Rifle Corps:
97th Rifle Division
144th Rifle Division
371st Rifle Division
72d Rifle Corps:
63d Rifle Division
215th Rifle Division
277th Rifle Division
2d Guards Tank Brigade
153d Tank Brigade
337th Heavy Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
343d Heavy Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
395th Heavy Guards Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
953d Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
954th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
958th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
3d Guards Artillery Penetration Division:
99th Heavy Howitzer Artillery Brigade
22d Guards Gun Artillery Brigade
43d Mortar Brigade
15th Guards Gun Artillery Brigade
16th Guards Antitank Artillery Brigade
9th Guards-Mortar Brigade (7th Guards-Mortar Division)
696th Antitank Artillery Regiment
283d Mortar Regiment
95th Guards-Mortar Regiment
326th Guards-Mortar Regiment
33d Antiaircraft Artillery Division:
1378th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1710th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1715th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1718th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
726th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
4th Assault Engineer-Sapper Brigade
63d Engineer-Sapper Brigade
513th Flame-thrower Regiment

31st Army
CO: Lieutenant-General V.V.Glagolev

Commissar: Major-General D.A.Karpenkov
CS: Major-General M.I.Shchedrin
36th Rifle Corps:
173d Rifle Division
220th Rifle Division
352d Rifle Division
71st Rifle Corps:
88th Rifle Division
192d Rifle Division
331st Rifle Division
113th Rifle Corps:
62d Rifle Division
174th Rifle Division
213th Tank Brigade
926th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
927th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
959th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1445th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
52d Sep. Armored Train
140th Gun Artillery Brigade
43d Antitank Artillery Brigade
83d Guards Howitzer Artillery Regiment
392d Corps Artillery Regiment
570th Corps Artillery Regiment
529th Antitank Artillery Regiment
549th Mortar Regiment
74th Guards-Mortar Regiment
66th Antiaircraft Artillery Division:
1981st Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1985th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1989th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1993d Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1275th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1478th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
525th Sep. Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion
31st Engineer-Sapper Brigade
14th Flame-thrower Battalion
15th Flame-thrower Battalion

39th Army
CO: Lieutenant-General I.I.Liudnikov
Commissar: Major-General V.P.Boiko
CS: Major-General M.I.Siminovsky
5th Guards Rifle Corps:
17th Guards Rifle Division
19th Guards Rifle Division

91st Guards Rifle Division
251st Rifle Division
84th Rifle Corps:
158th Rifle Division
164th Rifle Division
262d Rifle Division
28th Guard Tank Brigade
735th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
957th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
139th Gun Artillery Brigade
610th Antitank Artillery Brigade
555th Mortar Brigade
54th Guards-Mortar Regiment
621st Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1481st Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
32d Engineer-Sapper Brigade

5th Guards Tank Army
CO: Marshal of Armored Forces P.A.Rotmistrov
Lieutenant-General of Tank Forces M.D.Solomatin (from 8.8)
Lieutenant-General of Tank Forces V.T.Vol'sky (from 18.8)
Commissar: Major-General of Tank Forces P.G.Grishin
CS: Major-General of Tank Forces P.I.Kalinichenko
3d Guards Tank Corps: Major-General of Tank Forces I.A.Vovchenko;
Lieutenant-General A.P.Panfilov (from 11.8)
3d Guards Tank Brigade
18th Guards Tank Brigade
19th Guards Tank Brigade
2d Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade
376th Guards Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1436th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1496th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
749th Antitank Battalion
266th Mortar Regiment
324th Guards-Mortar Battalion
10th Guards Motorcycle Battalion
1701st Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
29th Tank Corps: Major-General of Tank Forces E.I.Fomichev;
Major-General of Tank Forces K.M.Malakhov (from 27.7)
25th Tank Brigade
31st Tank Brigade
32d Tank Brigade
53d Motorized Rifle Brigade
1223d Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1446th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
108th Antitank Regiment

271st Mortar Regiment
409th Guards-Mortar Battalion
75th Motorcycle Battalion
14th Guards Tank Regiment
1st Guards Motorcycle Regiment
678th Howitzer Artillery Regiment
689th Antitank Regiment
76th Guards-Mortar Regiment
6th Antiaircraft Artillery Division:
146th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
366th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
516th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1062d Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
377th Sep. Engineer Battalion

1st Air Army
CO: Lieutenant-General of Aviation M.M.Gromov
Commissar: Major-General of Aviation I.G.Litvichenko
CS: Major-General of Aviation A.S.Pronin
1st Guards Bomber Aviation Corps:
4th Guards Bomber Aviation Division
5th Guards Bomber Aviation Division
3d Guards Bomber Aviation Division
6th Guards Bomber Aviation Division
113th Bomber Aviation Division
334th Bomber Aviation Division
213th Fighter-Bomber Aviation Division
3d Assault Aviation Corps:
307th Assault Aviation Division
308th Assault Aviation Division
1st Guards Assault Aviation Division
311th Assault Aviation Division
1st Guards Fighter Aviation Corps:
3d Fighter Aviation Division
4th Fighter Aviation Division
2d Fighter Aviation Corps:
7th Guards Fighter Aviation Division
322d Fighter Aviation Division
3d Fighter Aviation Corps:
265th Fighter Aviation Division
278th Fighter Aviation Division
240th Fighter Aviation Division
303d Fighter Aviation Division
47th Guards Reconnaissance Aviation Regiment
10th Reconnaissance Aviation Regiment
117th Reconnaissance Aviation Regiment

142d Transport Aviation Regiment
1551st Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1552d Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1553d Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1565th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1600th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1602d Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment

Front subordination
3d Guards Cavalry Corps: Lieutenant-General N.S.Oslikovsky
5th Guards Cavalry Division
6th Guards Cavalry Division
32d Cavalry Division
1814th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
144th Antitank Artillery Regiment
3d Guards Antitank Artillery Regiment
3d Guards-Mortar Regiment
64th Guards-Mortar Battalion
1731st Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
3d Guards Mechanized Corps: Lieutenant-General of Tank Forces V.T.Obukhov
7th Guards Mechanized Brigade
8th Guards Mechanized Brigade
9th Guards Mechanized Brigade
35th Guards Tank Regiment
1510th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1823d Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
743d Antitank Artillery Regiment
129th Mortar Regiment
334th Guards-Mortar Regiment
1705th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
337th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
2d Guards Motorcycle Regiment
271st Motor-Battalion (amphibious vehicles)
5th Artillery Penetration Corps:
2d Artillery Penetration Division:
20th Guards High-power Howitzer Artillery Regiment
5th Guards Howitzer Artillery Brigade
6th Guards Gun Artillery Brigade
114th Gun Artillery Brigade
4th Guards Light Artillery Brigade
33d Mortar Brigade
20th Artillery Penetration Division:
102d High-power Howitzer Artillery Brigade
93d Heavy Howitzer Artillery Brigade
60th Howitzer Artillery Brigade
53d Gun Artillery Brigade

34th Light Artillery Brigade
20th Mortar Brigade
4th Guards Gun Artillery Division:
11th Guards Gun Artillery Brigade
12th Guards Gun Artillery Brigade
13th Guards Gun Artillery Brigade
14th Guards Gun Artillery Brigade
107th High-power Howitzer Artillery Brigade
8th Guards Howitzer Artillery Brigade
7th Guards Light Artillery Brigade (3d Guards Artillery Penetration Division)
119th High-power Howitzer Artillery Brigade
20th Antiaircraft Artillery Division:
1338th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1339th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1345th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1351st Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1281st Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1480th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
64th Sep. Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion
324th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion
500th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion
3d Assault Engineer-Sapper Brigade
13th Mine Engineer Brigade
8th Pontoon-Bridge Brigade
52d Construction Directorate
5th Front Construction Directorate

2D BELORUSSIAN FRONT

CO: Colonel-General G.F.Zakharov
CS: Lieutenant-General A.N.Bogoliubov
Commissar: Lieutenant-General L.Z.Mekhlis
Lieutenant-General N.E.Subbotin (from 28.7)

33d Army
CO: Lieutenant-General V.D.Kriuchenkin
Lieutenant-General S.I.Morozov (from 9.7)
Commissar: Major-General R.P.Babaichuk
CS: Major-General A.P.Penchevsky
70th Rifle Division
157th Rifle Division
344th Rifle Division
154th Fortified Region
6th Sep. Armored Train
873d Antitank Artillery Regiment
538th Mortar Regiment

1266th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
8th Electronics Battery
209th Engineer-Sapper Battalion (34th Engineer-Sapper Brigade)
143d Mine-Engineer Battalion (33d Mine-Engineer Brigade)

49th Army
CO: Lieutenant-General I.T.Grishin
Commissar: Major-General V.A.Sychev
CS: Major-General S.I.Kinosian
62d Rifle Corps:
324th Rifle Division
362d Rifle Division
69th Rifle Corps:
42d Rifle Division
222d Rifle Division
76th Rifle Corps:
49th Rifle Division
199th Rifle Division
290th Rifle Division
81st Rifle Corps:
32d Rifle Division
95th Rifle Division
153d Rifle Division
42d Guards Tank Brigade
43d Guards Tank Brigade
233d Tank Regiment
334th Guards Heavy Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
342d Guards Heavy Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
722d Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1196th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1197th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1444th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1902d Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1st Sep. Armored Train Battalion
31st Howitzer Artillery Brigade
32d Howitzer Artillery Brigade
142d Gun Artillery Brigade
143d Gun Artillery Brigade
144th Gun Artillery Brigade
2d Corps Artillery Brigade
5th Antitank Artillery Brigade
13th Antitank Artillery Brigade
27th Antitank Artillery Brigade
16th Guards Howitzer Artillery Regiment
55th Guards Howitzer Artillery Regiment
85th Guards Howitzer Artillery Regiment

49th Howitzer Artillery Regiment
81st Howitzer Artillery Regiment
331st Howitzer Artillery Regiment
472d Howitzer Artillery Regiment
1231st Howitzer Artillery Regiment
41st Guards Corps Artillery Regiment
517th Corps Artillery Regiment
557th Corps Artillery Regiment
322d Sep. Special-power Artillery Battalion
593d Antitank Artillery Regiment
4th Guards-Mortar Brigade
19th Mortar Brigade
77th Guards-Mortar Regiment
98th Guards-Mortar Regiment
100th Guards-Mortar Regiment
307th Guards-Mortar Regiment
325th Guards-Mortar Regiment
540th Mortar Regiment
544th Mortar Regiment
47th Antiaircraft Artillery Division:
1585th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1586th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1591st Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1592d Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
49th Antiaircraft Artillery Division:
1265th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1271st Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1272d Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
2012d Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1273d Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1479th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
4th Sep. Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion
66th Sep. Chemical Defense Battalion

50th Army
CO: Lieutenant-General I.V.Boldin
Commissar: Major-General A.I.Karamyshev
CS: Major-General N.G.Brilev
19th Rifle Corps:
324th Rifle Division
362d Rifle Division
38th Rifle Corps:
110th Rifle Division
139th Rifle Division
385th Rifle Division
121st Rifle Corps:

238th Rifle Division
380th Rifle Division
307th Rifle Division
1819th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1830th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
4th Antitank Artillery Brigade
1099th Corps Artillery Regiment:
1321st Antitank Artillery Regiment
481st Mortar Regiment
1484th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
16th Section, Flame-thrower Battalion:

4th Air Army
CO: Colonel-General of Aviation K.A.Vershinin
Commissar: Major-General of Aviation F.F.Verov
CS: Major-General of Aviation A.Z.Ustinov
Major-General of Aviation A.N.Alekseev (from 11.7)
325th Fighter-Bomber Aviation Division
230th Assault Aviation Division
233d Assault Aviation Division
229th Fighter Aviation Division
309th Fighter Aviation Division
164th Guards Reconnaissance Aviation Regiment
209th Corrective Reconnaissance Aviation Regiment
1550th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1604th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment

Front subordination
23 Guards Tank Brigade
256th Guards Tank Brigade
1434th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
225th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
341st Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
739th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1286th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1270th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1482d Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1709th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
490th Sep. Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion
614th Sep. Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion
1st Guards Assault Engineer-Sapper Brigade
11th Engineer-Sapper Brigade
34th Engineer-Sapper Brigade
50th Engineer-Sapper Brigade
33d Special Designation Engineer-Sapper Brigade
20th Construction Directorate

5th Sep. Chemical Defense Battalion

1ST BELORUSSIAN FRONT (RIGHT WING)
CO: Army-General K.K.Rokossovsky
CS: Colonel-General M.S.Malinin
Commissar: Lieutenant-General N.A.Bulganin

3d Army
CO: Lieutenant-General A.V.Gorbatov
Commissar: Major-General I.P.Konnov
CS: Major-General M.V.Ivashechkin
35th Rifle Corps:
250th Rifle Division
323d Rifle Division
348th Rifle Division
40th Rifle Corps:
129th Rifle Division
169th Rifle Division
41st Rifle Corps:
120th Guards Rifle Division
269th Rifle Division
46th Rifle Corps:
82d Rifle Division
108th Rifle Division
413th Rifle Division
80th Rifle Corps:
5th Rifle Division
186th Rifle Division
283d Rifle Division
9th Tank Corps: Major-General of Tank Forces B.S.Bakharov; Major-General of Tank Forces N.I.Voeikov (from 17.7)
23d Tank Brigade
95th Tank Brigade
108th Tank Brigade
8th Motorized Rifle Brigade
1455th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1508th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
218th Mortar Regiment
286th Guards-Mortar Regiment
216th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
36th Tank Regiment
40th Tank Regiment
193d Tank Regiment
223d Tank Regiment
510th Tank Regiment

8th Self-propelled Artillery Brigade
340th Guards Heavy Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
341st Guards Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1812th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1888th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1899th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1900th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1901st Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
122d High-power Gun Artillery Brigade
124th High-power Gun Artillery Brigade
44th Gun Artillery Brigade
41st Antitank Artillery Brigade
44th Antitank Artillery Brigade
295th Guards Gun Artillery Regiment
1091st Gun Artillery Regiment
120th Antitank Artillery Regiment
584th Antitank Artillery Regiment
1071st Antitank Artillery Regiment
1311th Antitank Artillery Regiment
286th Mortar Regiment
475th Mortar Regiment
35th Guards-Mortar Brigade
16th Guards-Mortar Brigade (5th Guards-Mortar Division):
37th Guards-Mortar Regiment
56th Guards-Mortar Regiment
94th Guards-Mortar Regiment
313th Guards-Mortar Regiment
28th Antiaircraft Artillery Division:
1355th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1359th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1365th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1371st Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1284th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1st Assault Engineer-Sapper Brigade
10th Engineer-Sapper Brigade
7th Pontoon-Bridge Brigade
141st Flame-thrower Company (back-pack) (510th Flame-thrower Regiment
207th Flame-thrower Company (back-pack) (510th Flame-thrower Regiment
40th Mine-sweeper Regiment
48th Pontoon-Bridge Battalion

28th Army
CO: Lieutenant-General A.A.Luchinsky
Commissar: Major-General A.N.Mel’nikov
CS: Major-General S.M.Rogachevsky
3d Guards Rifle Corps:

50th Guards Rifle Division
54th Guards Rifle Division
96th Guards Rifle Division
20th Rifle Corps:
48th Guards Rifle Division
55th Guards Rifle Division
20th Rifle Division
128th Rifle Corps:
61st Rifle Division
130th Rifle Division
152d Rifle Division
119th Fortified Region
153d Fortified Region
161st Fortified Region
30th Guards Tank Regiment
347th Guards Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
881st Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1416th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1898th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
5th Artillery Penetration Division:
100th High-power Howitzer Artillery Brigade
86th Heavy Howitzer Artillery Brigade
9th Howitzer Artillery Brigade
24th Gun Artillery Brigade
23d Guards Light Artillery Brigade
1st Mortar Brigade
12th Artillery Penetration Division:
104th High-power Howitzer Artillery Brigade
89th Heavy Howitzer Artillery Brigade
32d Howitzer Artillery Brigade
41st Gun Artillery Brigade
46th Light Artillery Brigade
11th Mortar Brigade
3d Corps Artillery Brigade
377th Gun Artillery Regiment
530th Antitank Artillery Regiment
133d Guards Mortar Regiment
22d Guards-Mortar Brigade (5th Guards-Mortar Division)
62d Guards-Mortar Regiment
316th Guards-Mortar Regiment
607th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
2d Assault Engineer-Sapper Brigade
36th Engineer Sapper Brigade
41st Sep. Flame-thrower Battalion (516th Flame-thrower Regiment)

48th Army

CO: Lieutenant-General P.L.Romanenko
Commissar: Major-General N.A.Istomin
CS: Major-General I.S.Glebov
29th Rifle Corps:
102d Rifle Division
217th Rifle Division
42d Rifle Corps:
137th Rifle Division
170th Rifle Division
399th Rifle Division
53d Rifle Corps:
17th Rifle Division
73d Rifle Division
96th Rifle Division
194th Rifle Division
115th Fortified Region
42d Tank Regiment
231st Tank Regiment
713th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1890th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1897th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
39th Sep. Armored Train Battalion
22d Artillery Penetration Division:
63d Howitzer Artillery Brigade
59th Gun Artillery Brigade
13th Light Artillery Brigade
68th Gun Artillery Brigade
220th Guards Antitank Artillery Brigade
479th Mortar Regiment
6th Guards-Mortar Regiment
84th Guards-Mortar Regiment
31st Antiaircraft Artillery Division:
1376th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1380th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1386th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1392d Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
461st Antiaircraft Artillery Division
57th Engineer-Sapper Brigade
4th Heavy Pontoon Park
104th Pontoon-Bridge Battalion
142d Sep. Flame-thrower Battalion (back-pack)

65th Army
CO: Lieutenant-General P.I.Batov
Commissar: Major-General N.A.Radetsky
CS: Major-General M.V.Bobkov

18th Rifle Corps:
37th Guards Rifle Division
44th Guards Rifle Division
69th Rifle Division
105th Rifle Corps:
75th Guards Rifle Division
193d Rifle Division
354th Rifle Division
15th Rifle Division
356th Rifle Division
115th Rifle Brigade
1st Guards Tank Corps: Major-General of Tank Forces M.F.Panov
15th Guards Tank Brigade
16th Guards Tank Brigade
17th Guards Tank Brigade
1st Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade
1001st Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1296th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
455th Mortar Regiment
45th Guards-Mortar Battalion
80th Guards Antiaircraft Regiment
251st Tank Regiment
345th Guards Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
354th Guards Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
922d Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
925th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
26th Artillery Division:
77th Howitzer Artillery Brigade
56th Gun Artillery Brigade
75th Light Artillery Brigade
4th Corps Artillery Brigade
30th Guards Gun Artillery Brigade
147th Gun Artillery Brigade
157th Gun Artillery Brigade
3d Guards Antitank Artillery Brigade
1st Antitank Artillery Brigade
543d Antitank Artillery Regiment
315th Sep. Special-power Artillery Battalion
317th Sep. Special-power Artillery Battalion
23d Guards-Mortar Brigade (5th Guards-Mortar Division)
43d Guards-Mortar Regiment
92d Guards-Mortar Regiment
311th Guards-Mortar Regiment
143d Guards-Mortar Regiment
235th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
14th Engineer-Sapper Brigade

177th Sep. Flame-thrower Battalion (back-pack)

Cavalry-mechanized group
CO: Lieutenant-General I.A.Pliev
4th Guards Cavalry Corps: Lieutenant-General I.A.Pliev
9th Guards Cavalry Division
10th Guards Cavalry Division
30th Cavalry Division
151st Tank Regiment
128th Tank Regiment
134th Tank Regiment
1715th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1815th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
152d Guards Antitank Artillery Regiment
4th Guards Antitank Artillery Battalion
12th Guards-Mortar Regiment
68th Guards-Mortar Battalion
255th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1st Mechanized Corps: Lieutenant-General of Tank Forces. M.Krivoshein
19th Mechanized Brigade
35th Mechanized Brigade
37th Mechanized Brigade
219th Tank Brigade
73d Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
294th Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
1822d Self-propelled Artillery Regiment
41st Guards-Mortar Battalion
273d Motorized Battalion (amphibious vehicles)
1323d Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
2d Guards Antiaircraft Artillery Division:
302d Guards Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
303d Guards Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
306th Guards Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment

16th Air Army
CO: Colonel-General of Aviation S.I.Rudenko
Commissar: Major-General of Aviation A.S.Vinogradov
CS: Major-General of Aviation P.I.Braiko
3d Bomber Aviation Corps:
241st Bomber Aviation Division
301st Bomber Aviation Division
132d Bomber Aviation Division
271st Fighter-Bomber Division
4th Assault Aviation Corps:
196th Assault Aviation Division
199th Assault Aviation Division

2d Guards Assault Aviation Division
299th Assault Aviation Division
300th Assault Aviation Division
6th Fighter Aviation Corps:
273d Fighter Aviation Division
279th Fighter Aviation Division
8th Fighter Aviation Corps:
215th Fighter Aviation Division
323d Fighter Aviation Division
1st Guards Fighter Aviation Division
234th Fighter Aviation Division
283d Fighter Aviation Division
286th Fighter Aviation Division
6th Composite Aviation Corps:
221st Bomber Aviation Division
282d Fighter Aviation Division
16th Reconnaissance Aviation Regiment
98th Corrective Reconnaissance Aviation Regiment
325th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1560th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1601st Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1610th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1611th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1612th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
1974th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment

Dnepr Military Flotilla
CO: Rear-Admiral V.V.Grigor'ev
Commissar: Captain 1st Rank P.V.Boiarchenko
CS: Captain 2d Rank K.M.Balakirev
1st Brigade of River Boats
2d Brigade of River Boats
3d Brigade of River Boats
3d Brigade of Minesweepers
1st Sep. Section of River Cutters
2d Sep. Section of River Cutters

Front subordination
4th Artillery Penetration Corps (headquarters)
35th Engineer-Sapper Brigade
27th Construction Directorate
1st Sep. Engineer Sapper Battalion (mine-clearing dogs)
6th Sep. Engineer Sapper Battalion (mine-clearing dogs)
8th Sep. Engineer Sapper Battalion (mine-clearing dogs)
9th Guards Sep. Engineer Sapper Battalion
10th Sep. Engineer Sapper Battalion

Appendix 2
Soviet personnel losses during the Belorussian operation (includes entire 1st Belorussian Front)

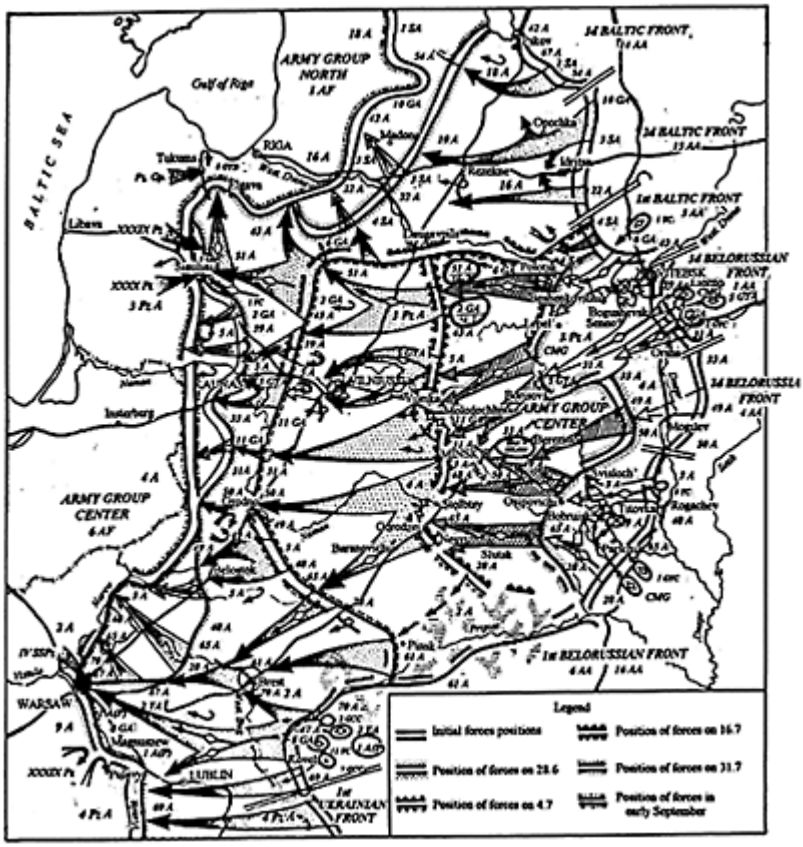
		Losses		
Front	*Strength**	*Combat*	*Medical*	*Total*
1st Baltic	359,500	41,248	125,053	166,301
3d Belorussian	579,300	45,117	155,165	200,282
2d Belorussian	319,500	26,315	91,421	117,736
1st Belorussian	1,071,100	65,779	215,615	281,394
Dnepr Flotilla	2,300	48	54	102
TOTAL	2,331,700	178,507	587,308	765,815

Note: * Includes combat and non-combat strength.

Source: G.F.Krivosheev, *Grif sekretnosti sniat: poteri vooruzhennykh sil SSSR v voinakh, boevykh deistviiakh i voennykh konfliktakh* (The Secret Classification is Removed: Losses of the USSR's Armed Forces in Wars, Combat Operations, and Military Conflicts) (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1993, pp. 202–3).

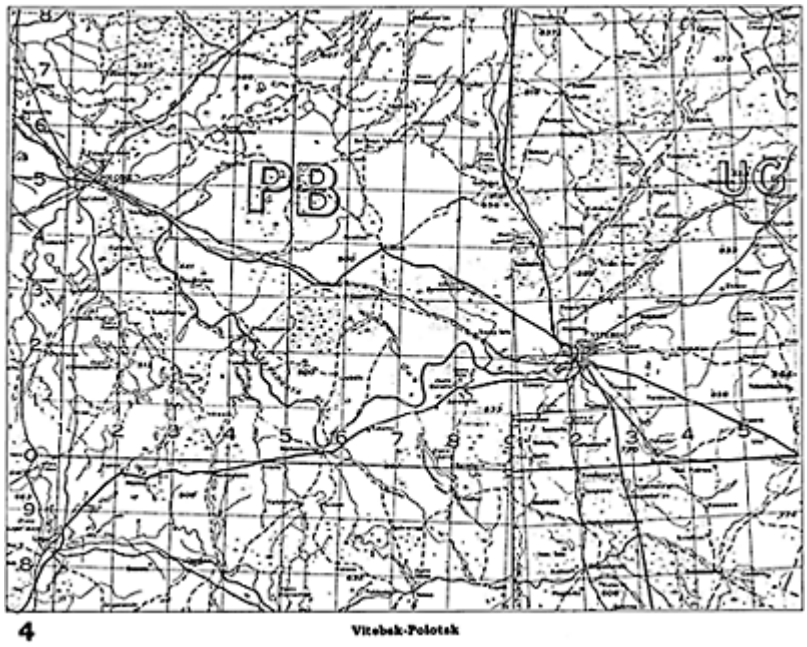
Appendix 3
Maps

1. The situation along the Soviet-German front on 22 June 1944 and the Summer-Fall Campaign, June-October 1944.

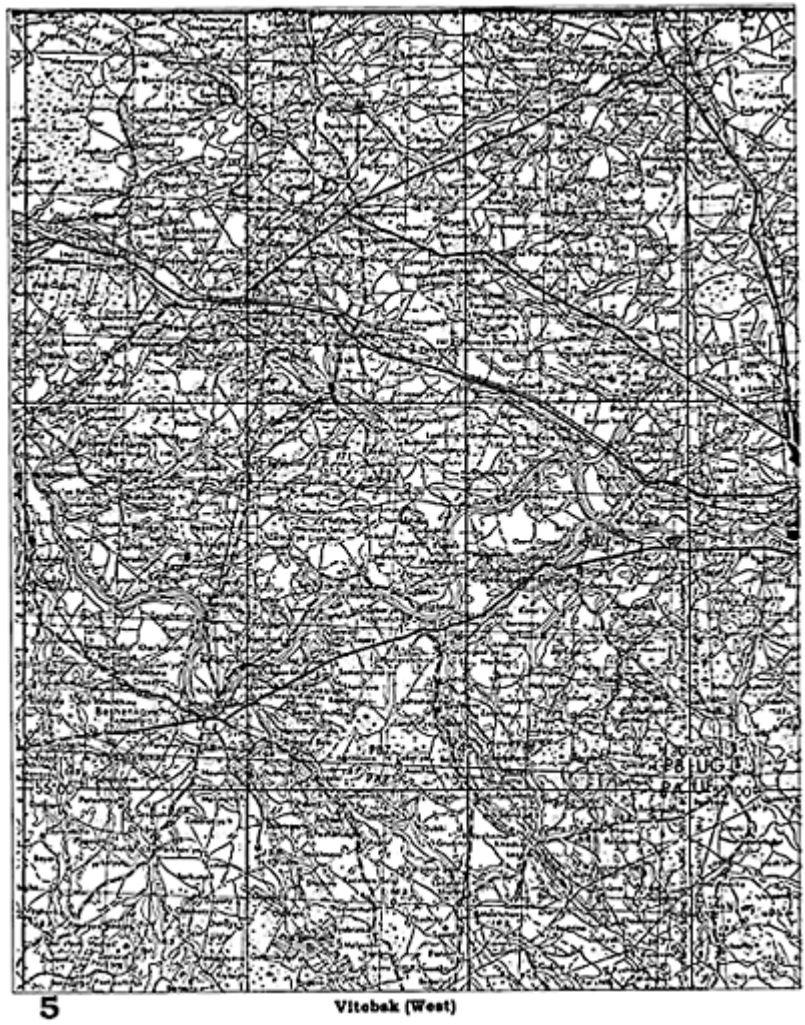


2. The opposing forces in Belorussia and the Belorussian operation (23 June–29 August 1944).

3. The *Stavka* offensive concept, Summer 1944.

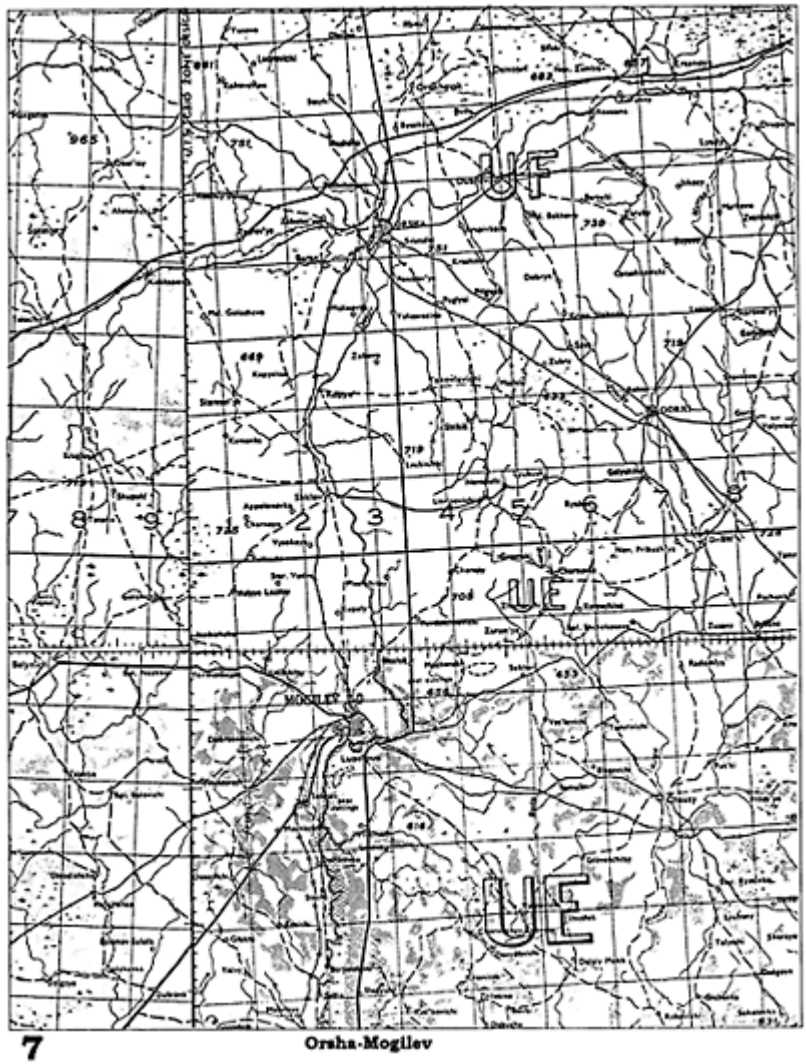


4. Vitebsk-Polotsk



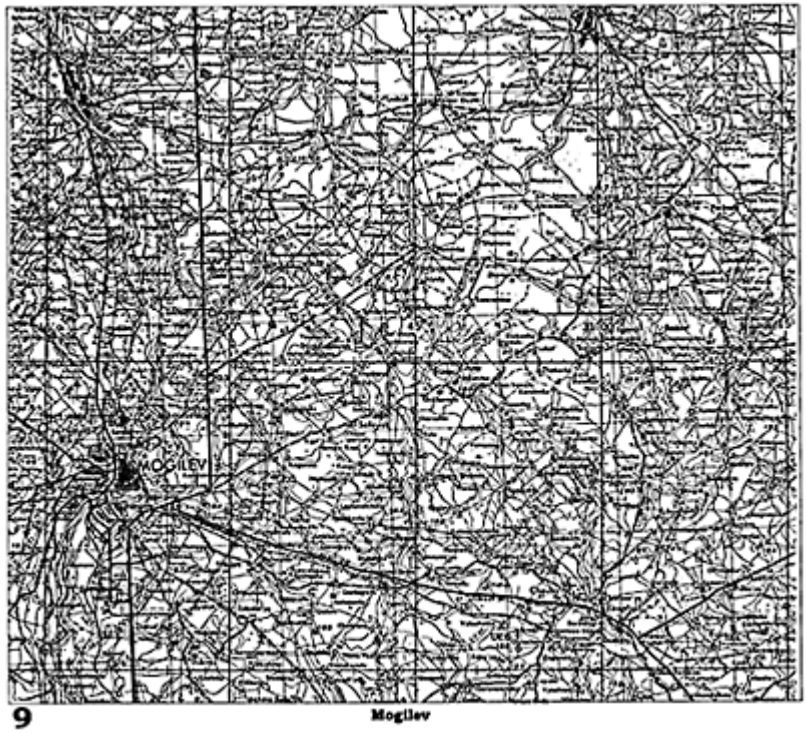
5. Vitebsk (West)

6. Vitebsk (South)

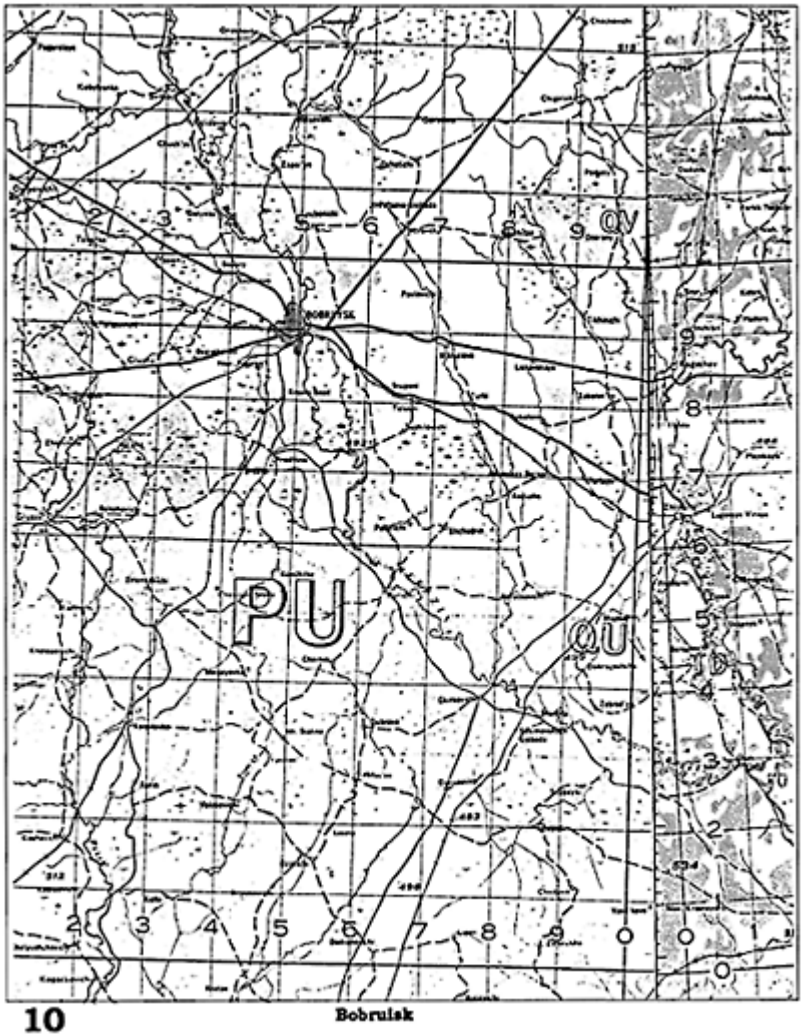


7. Orsha-Mogilev

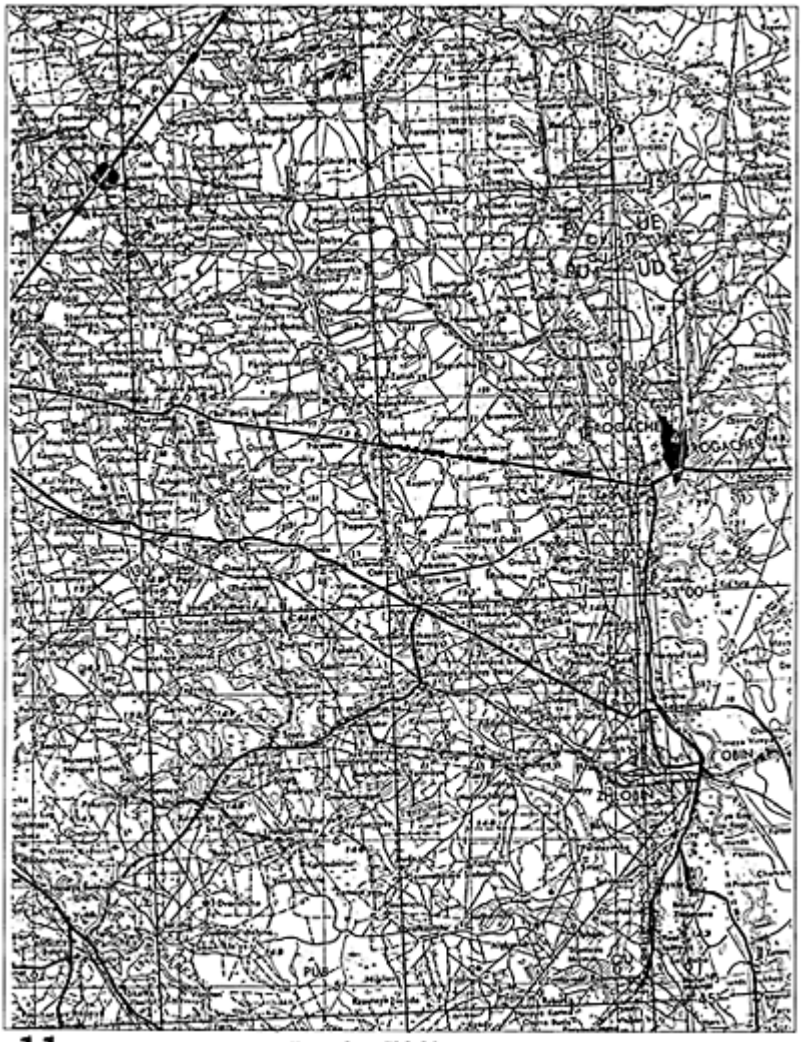
8. Orsha



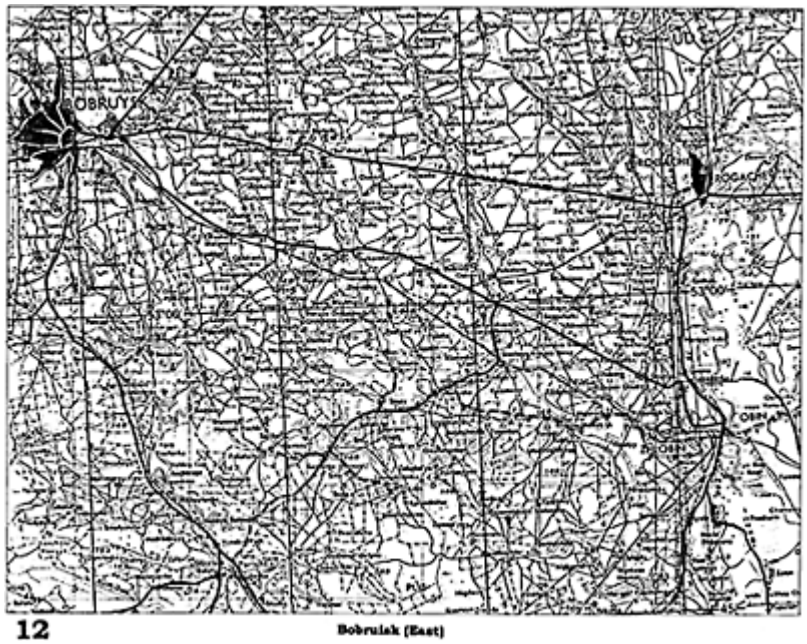
9. Mogilev



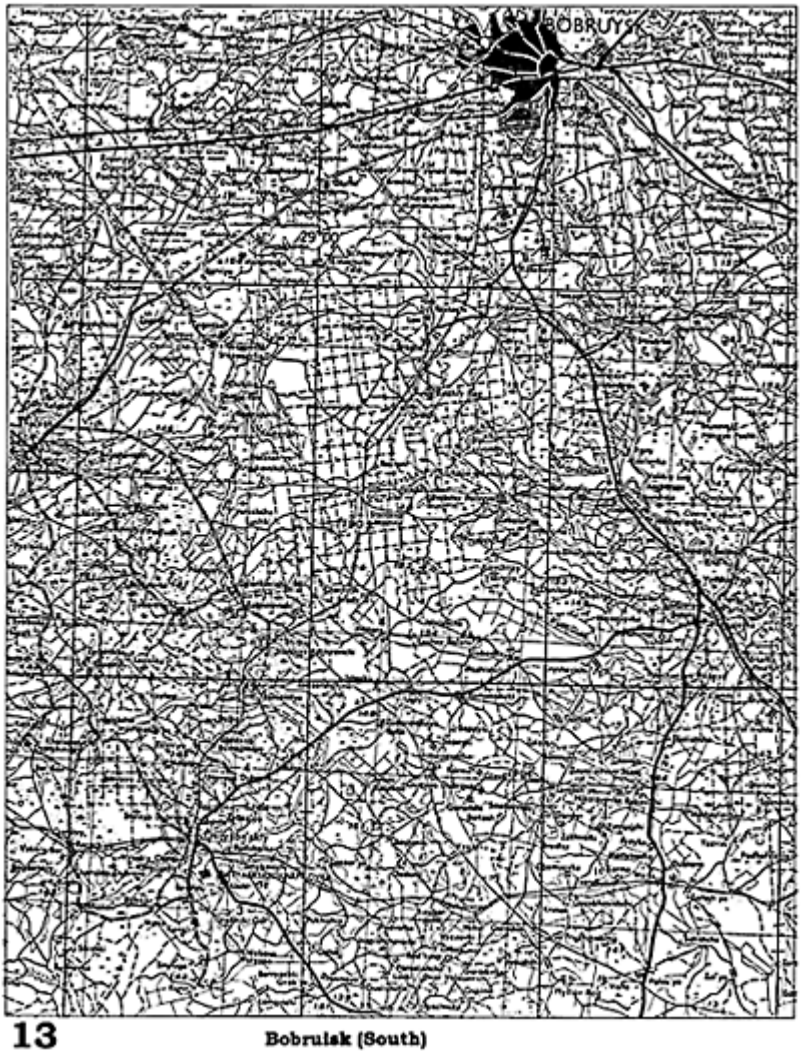
10. Bobruisk



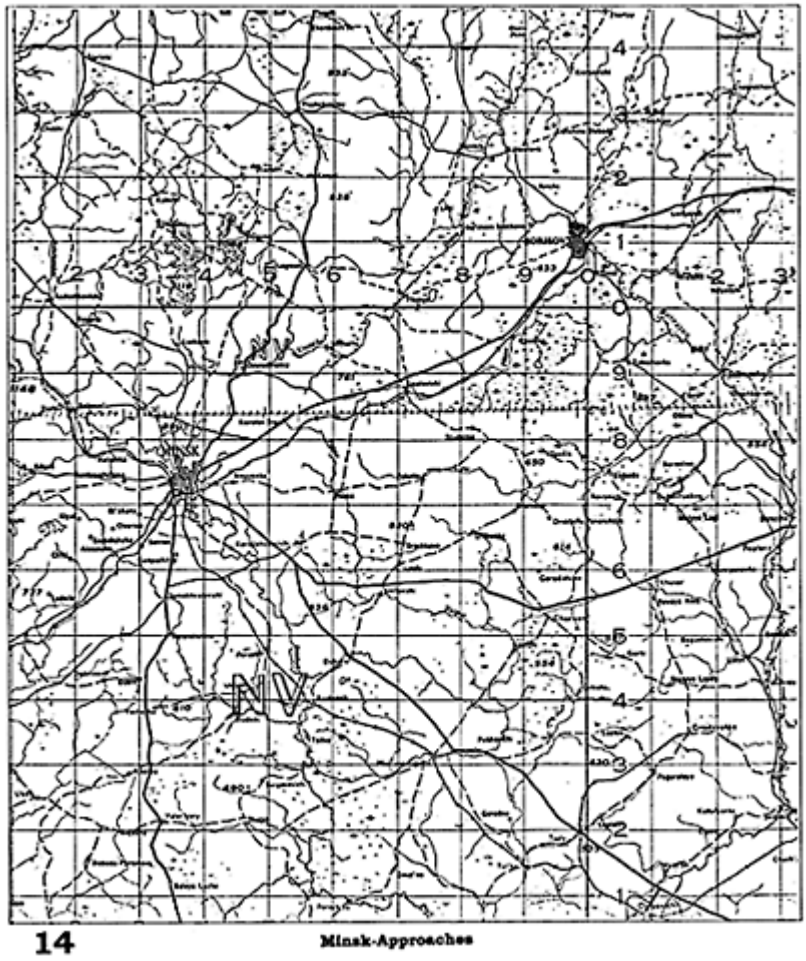
11. Rogachev-Zhlobin



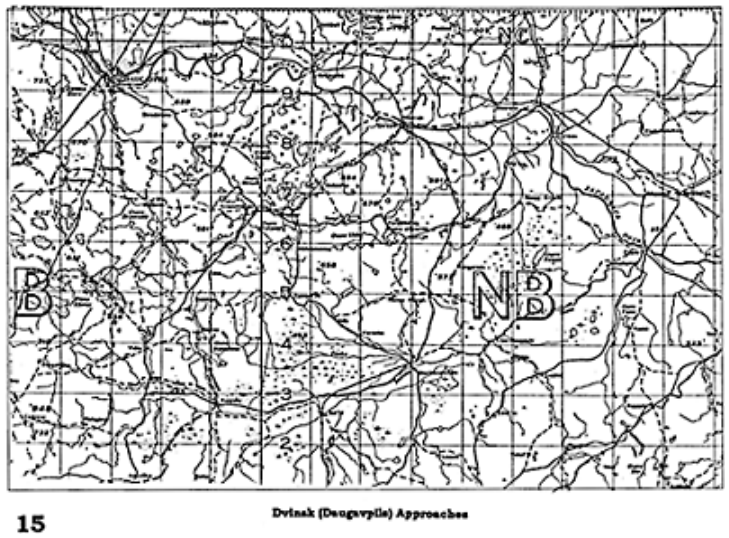
12. Bobruisk (East)



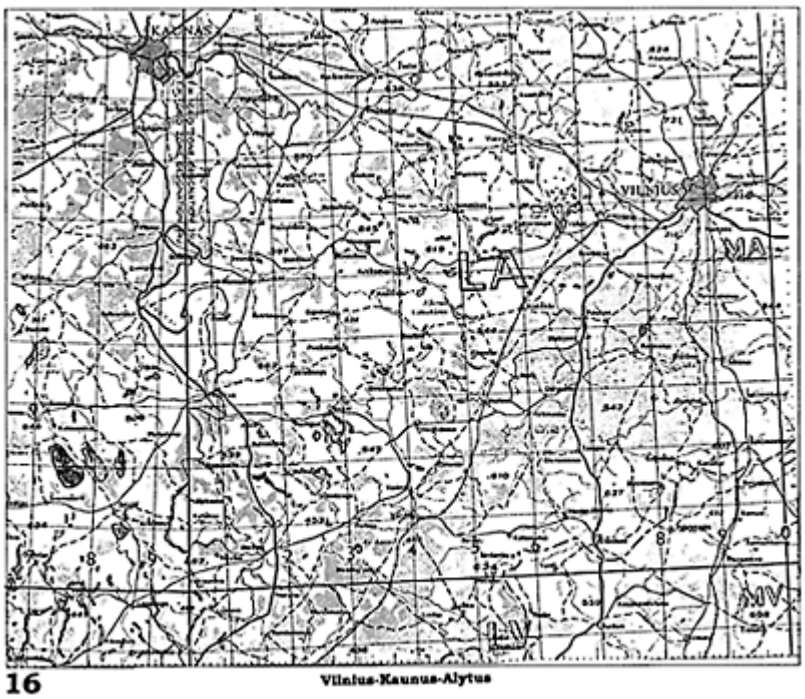
13. Bobruisk (South)



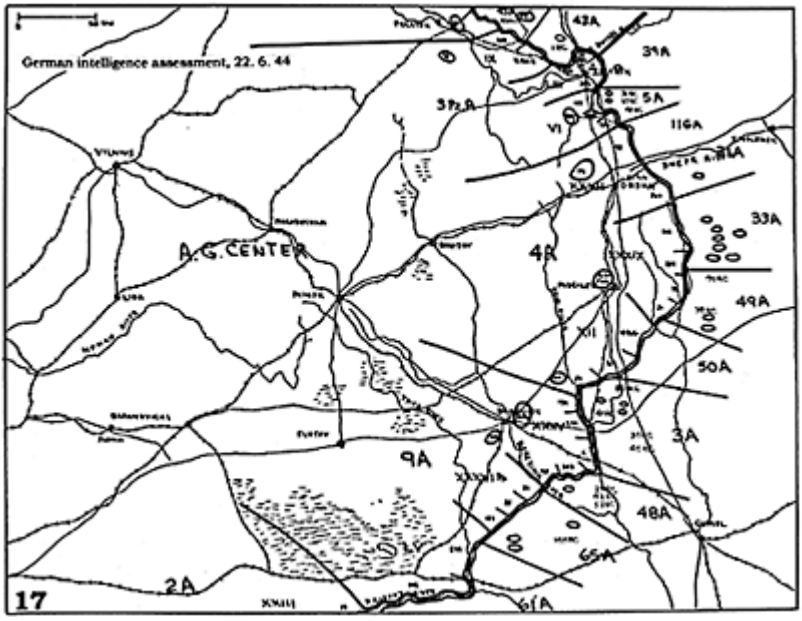
14. Minsk Approaches



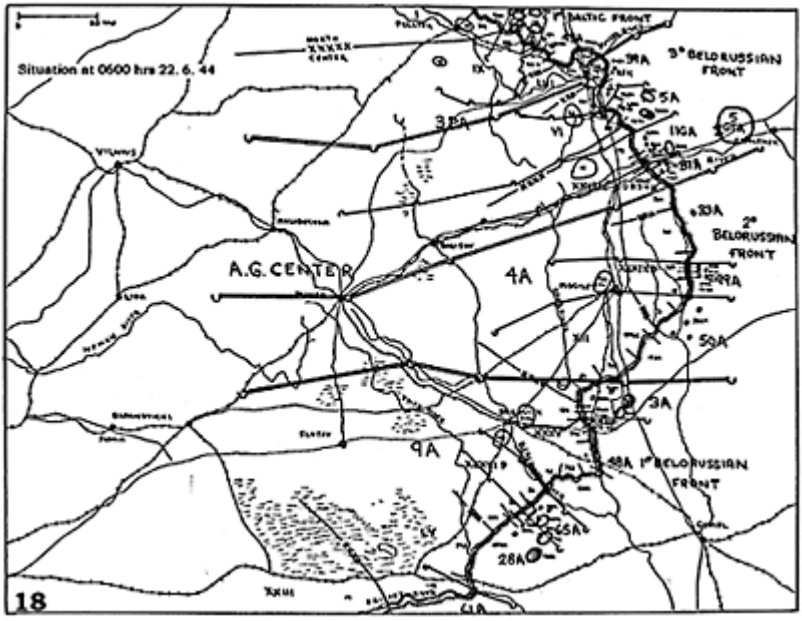
15. Dvinsk (Daugavpils) Approaches



16. Vilnius-Kaunas-Alytus

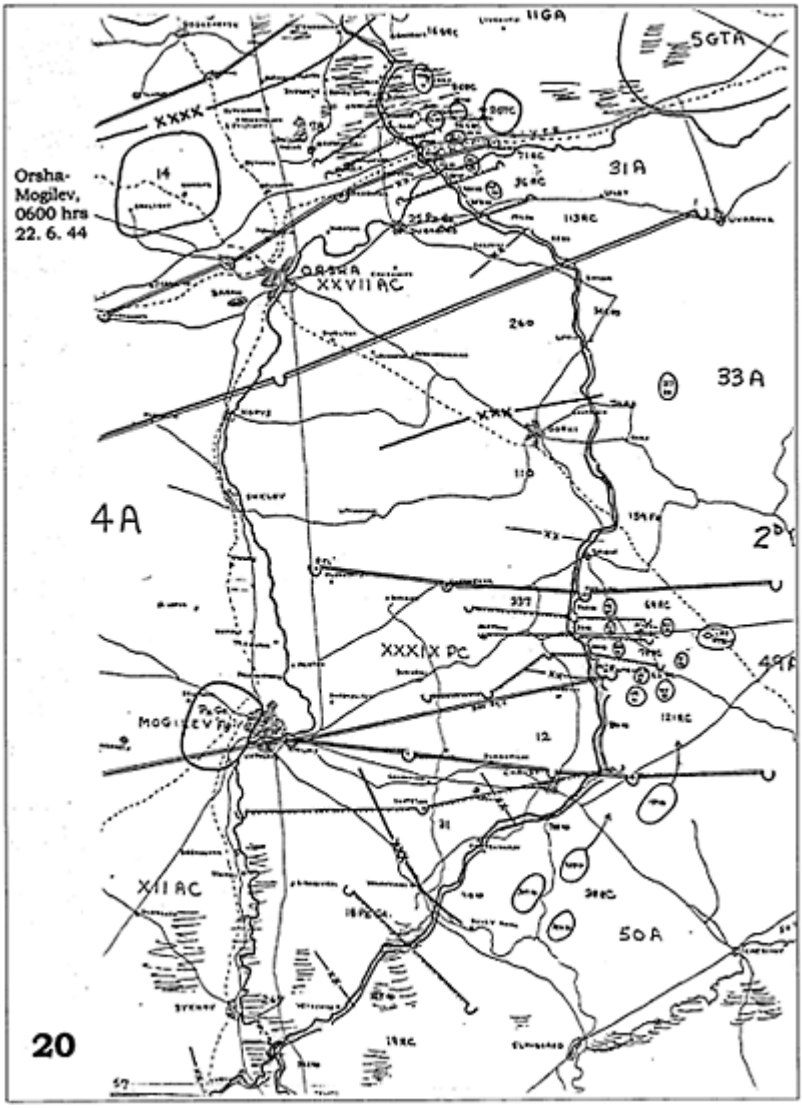


17. German intelligence assessment, 22.6.44

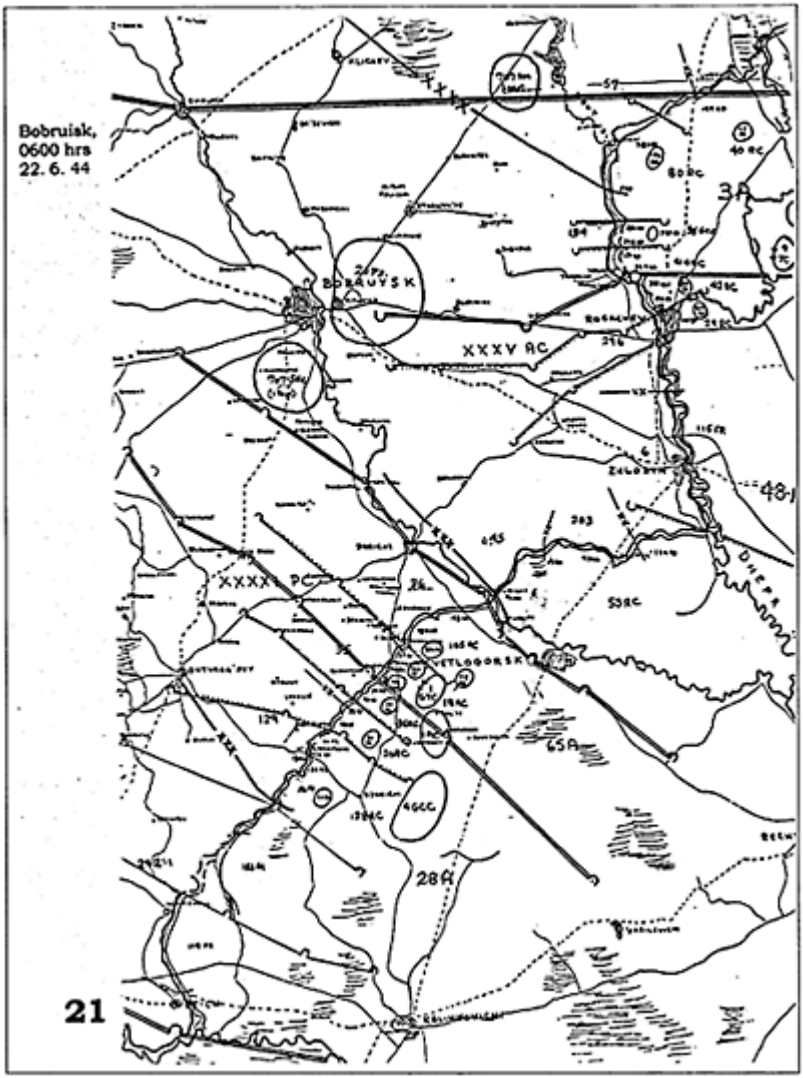


18. Situation at 0600 hrs 22.6.44

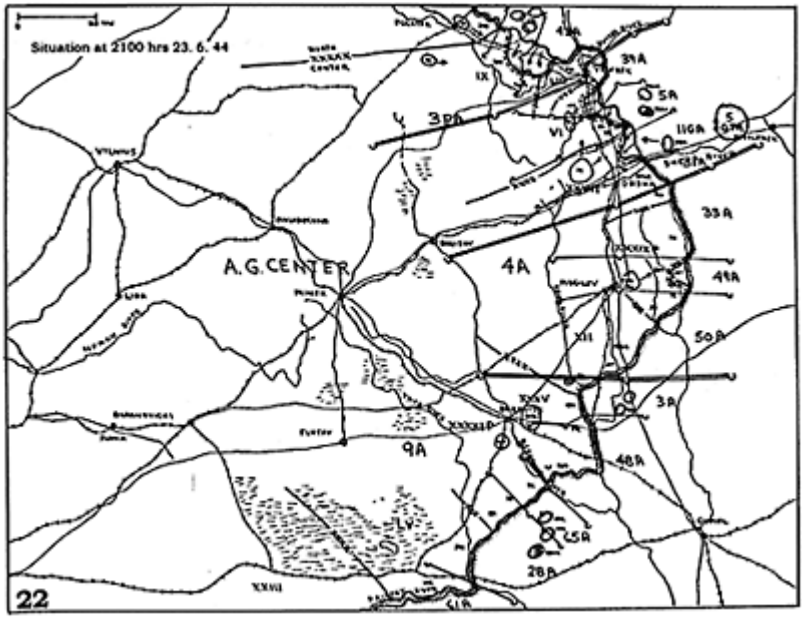
19. Vitebsk, 0600 hrs 22.6.44



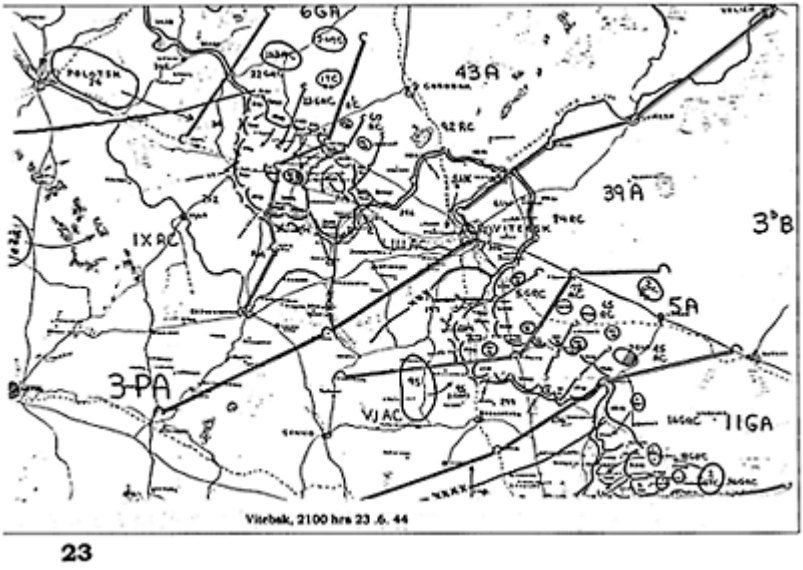
20. Orsha-Mogilev, 0600 hrs 22.6.44



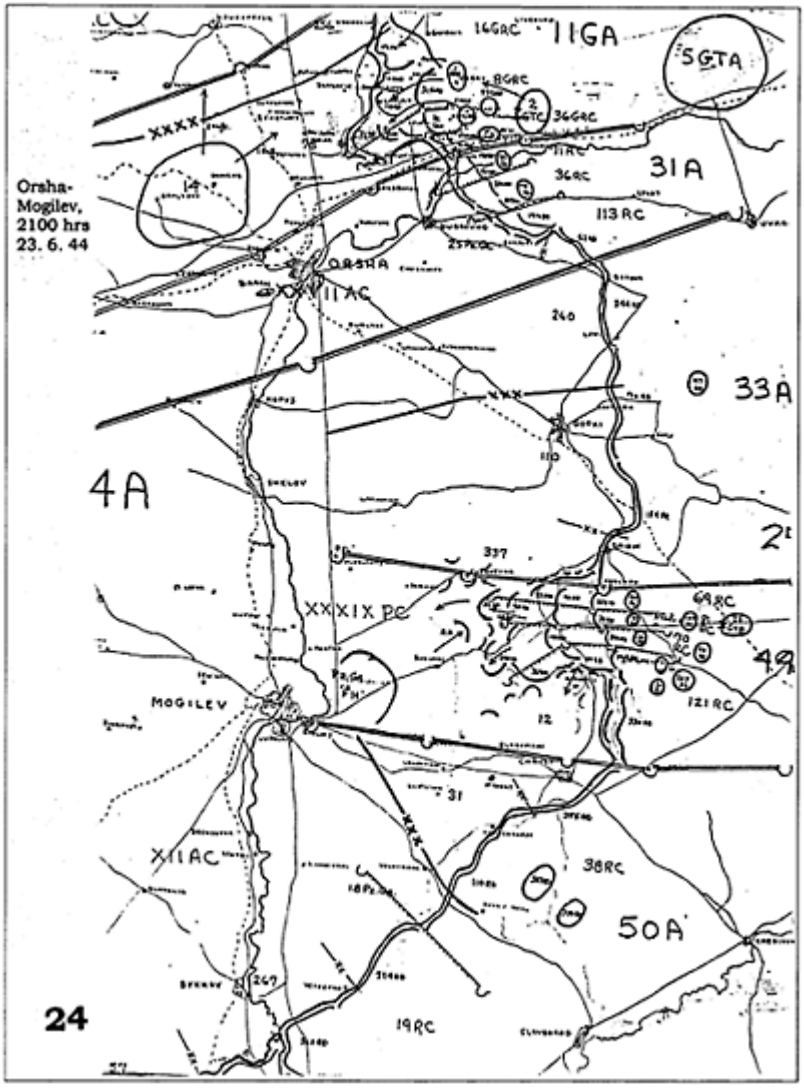
21. Bobruisk, 0600 hrs 22.6.44



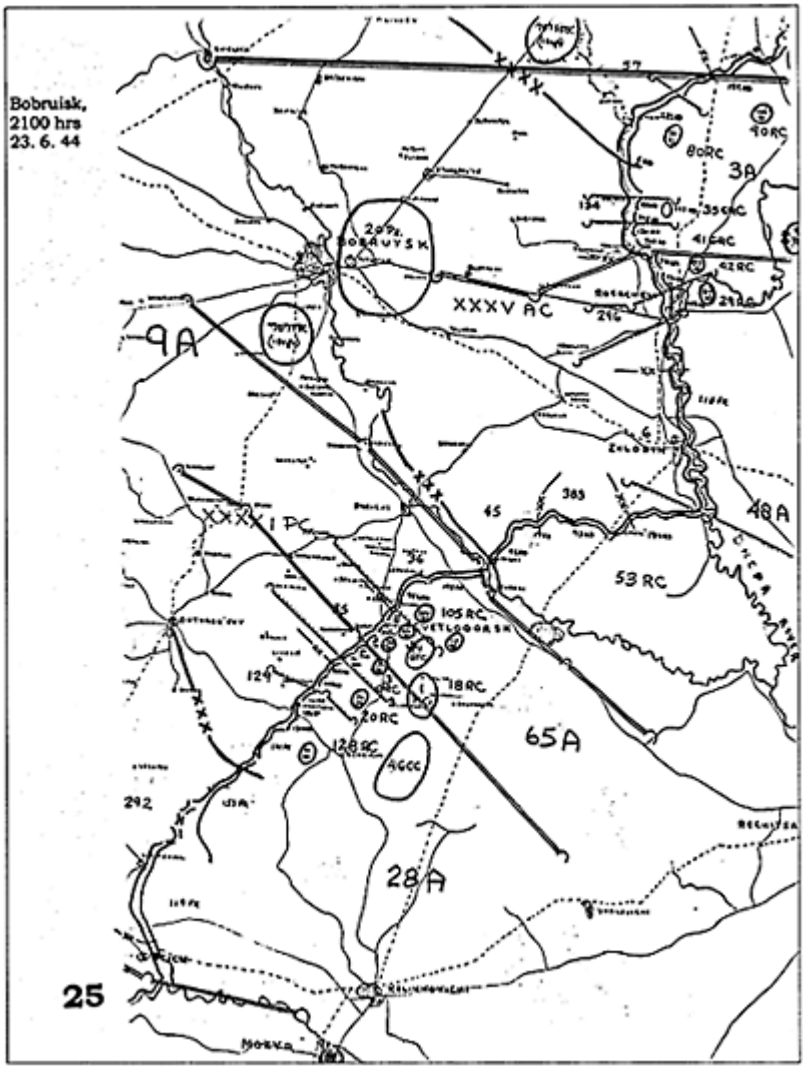
22. Situation at 2100 hrs 23.6.44



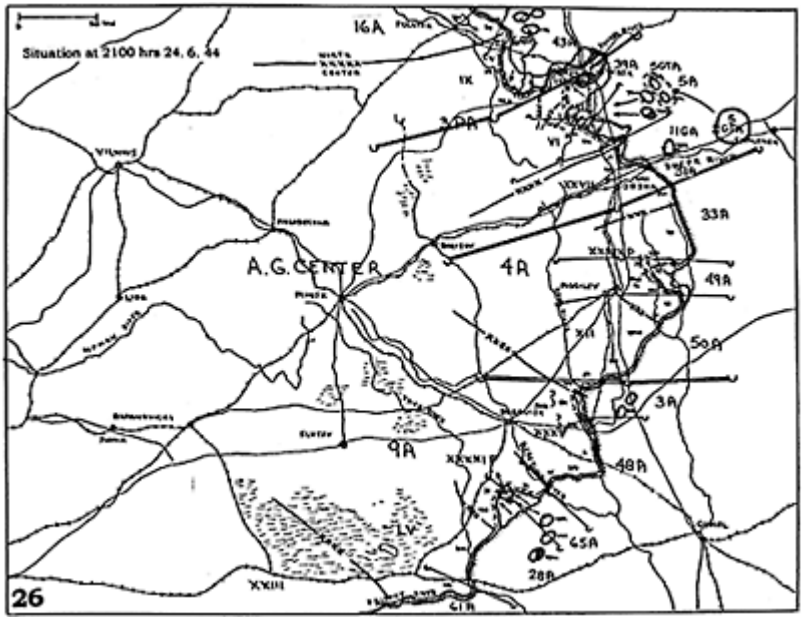
23. Vitebsk, 2100 hrs 23.6.44



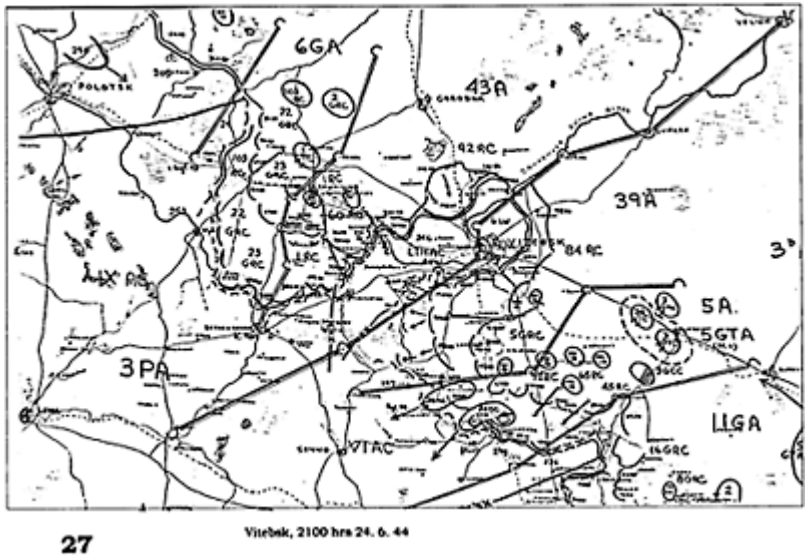
24. Orsha-Mogilev, 2100 hrs 23.6.44



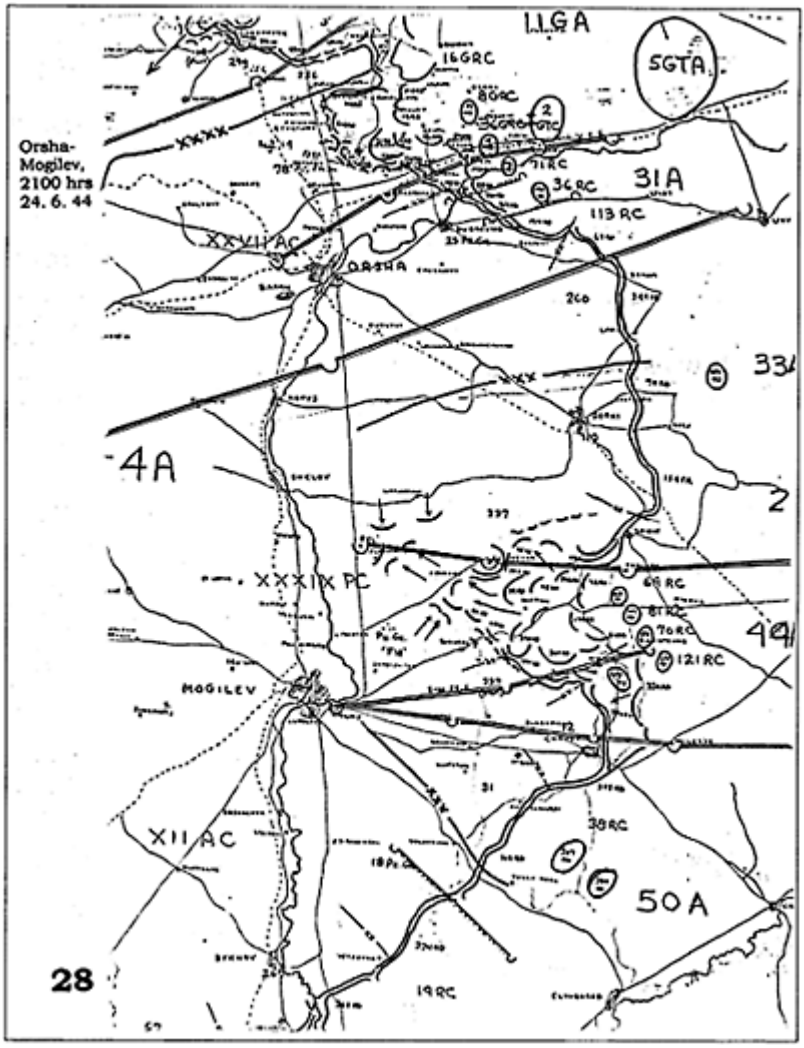
25. Bobruisk, 2100 hrs 23.6.44



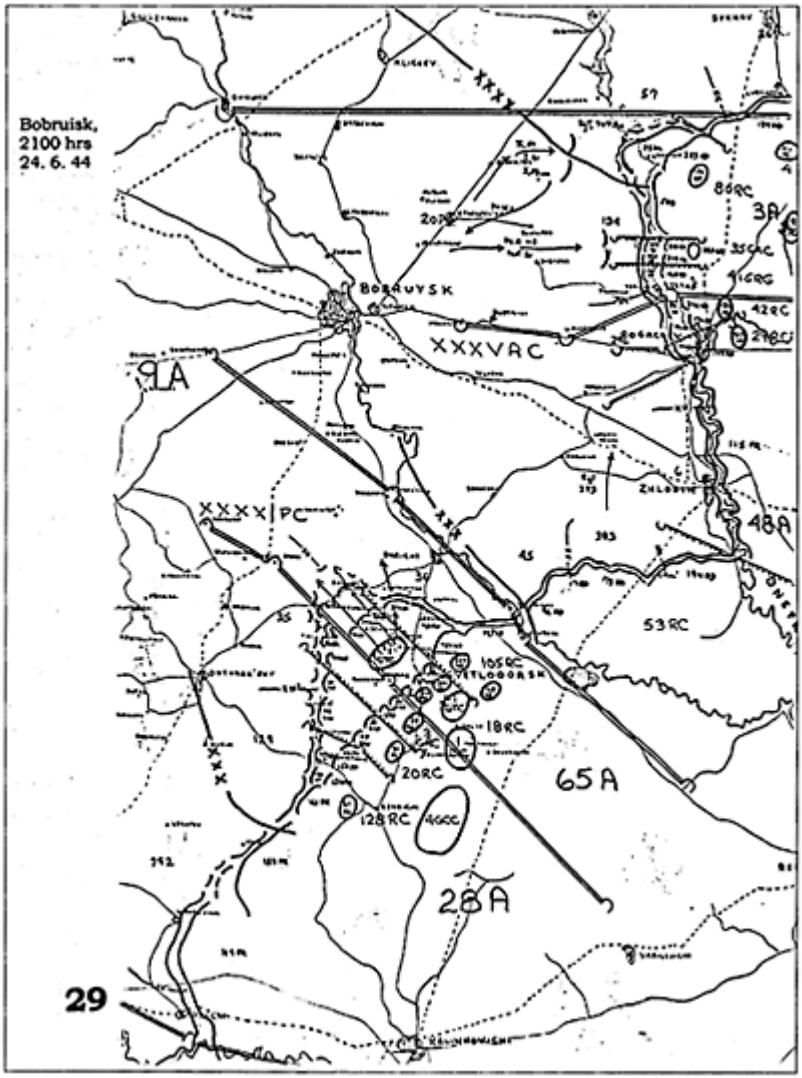
26. Situation at 2100 hrs 24.6.44



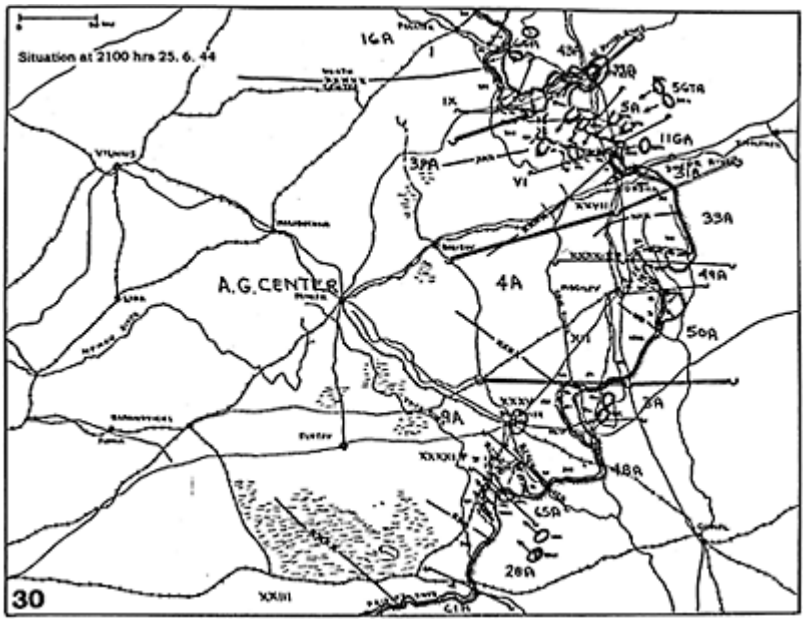
27. Vitebsk, 2100 hrs 24.6.44



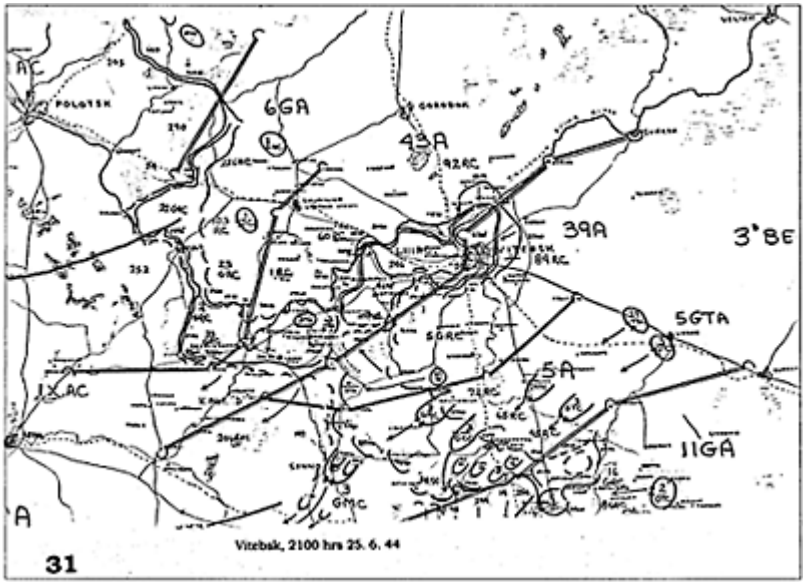
28. Orsha-Mogilev, 2100 hrs 24.6.44



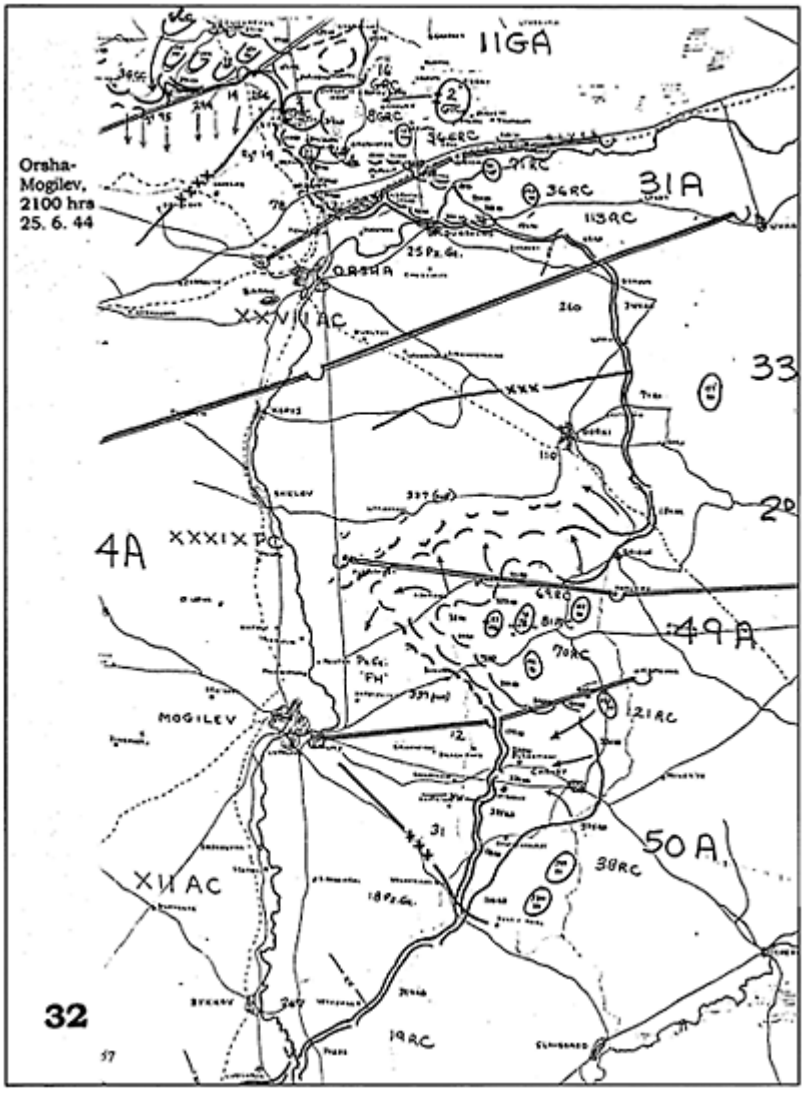
29. Bobruisk, 2100 hrs 24.6.44



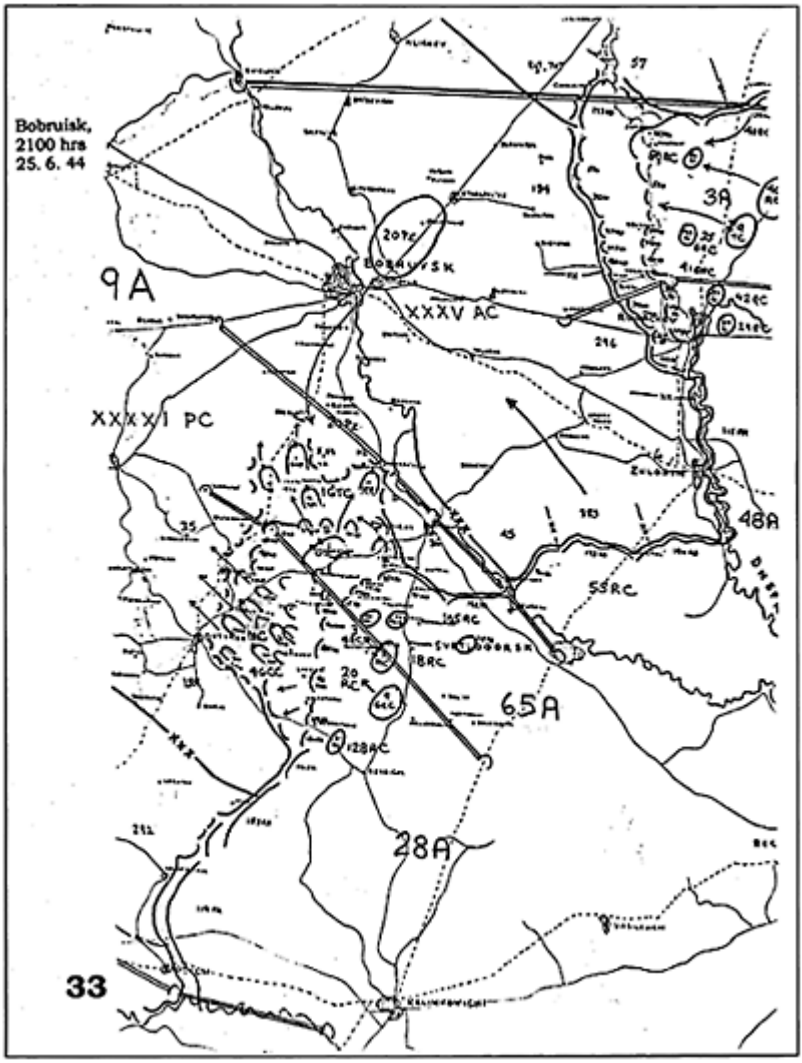
30. Situation at 2100 hrs 25.6.44



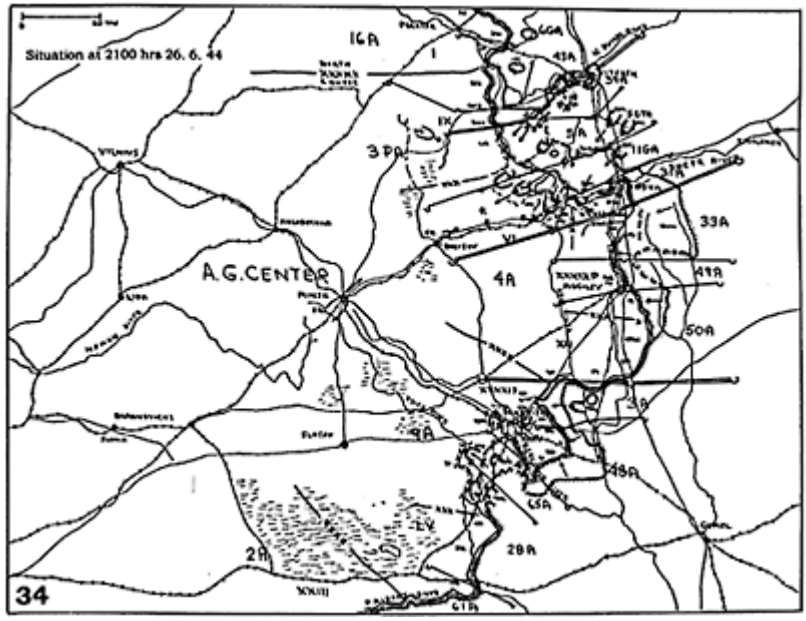
31. Vitebsk, 2100 hrs 25.6.44



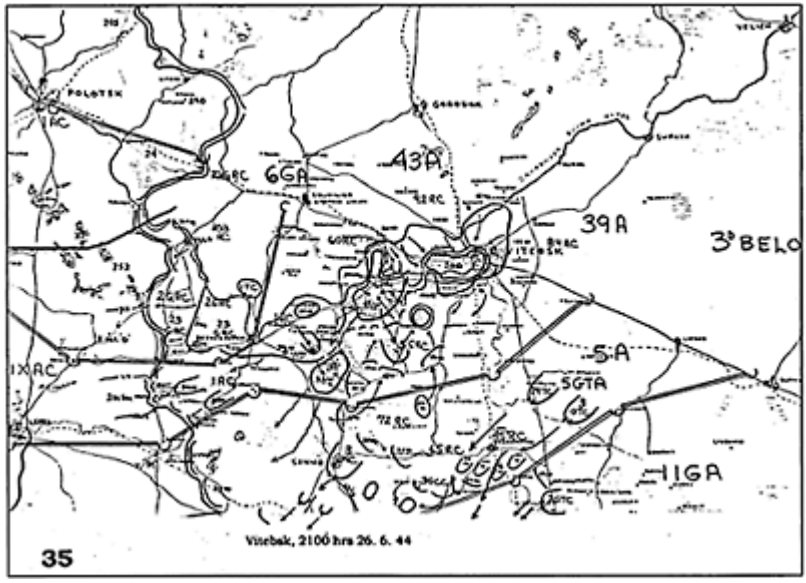
32. Orsha-Mogilev, 2100 hrs 25.6.44



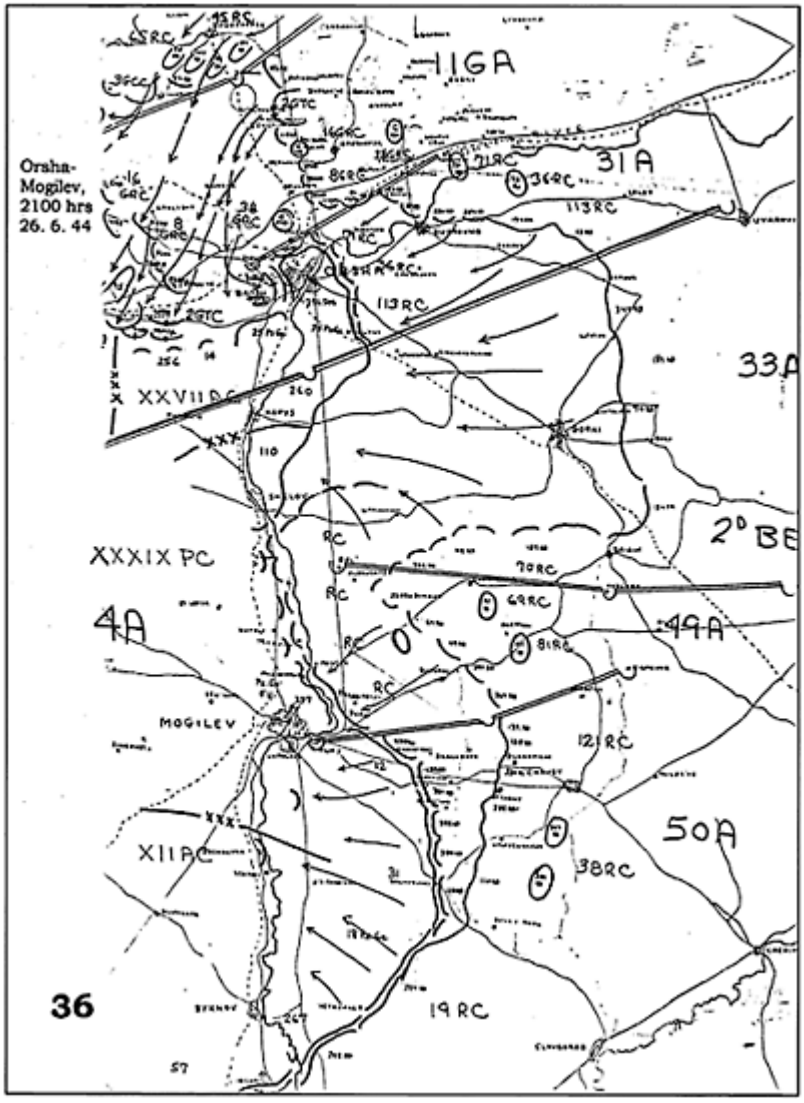
33. Bobruisk, 2100 hrs 25.6.44



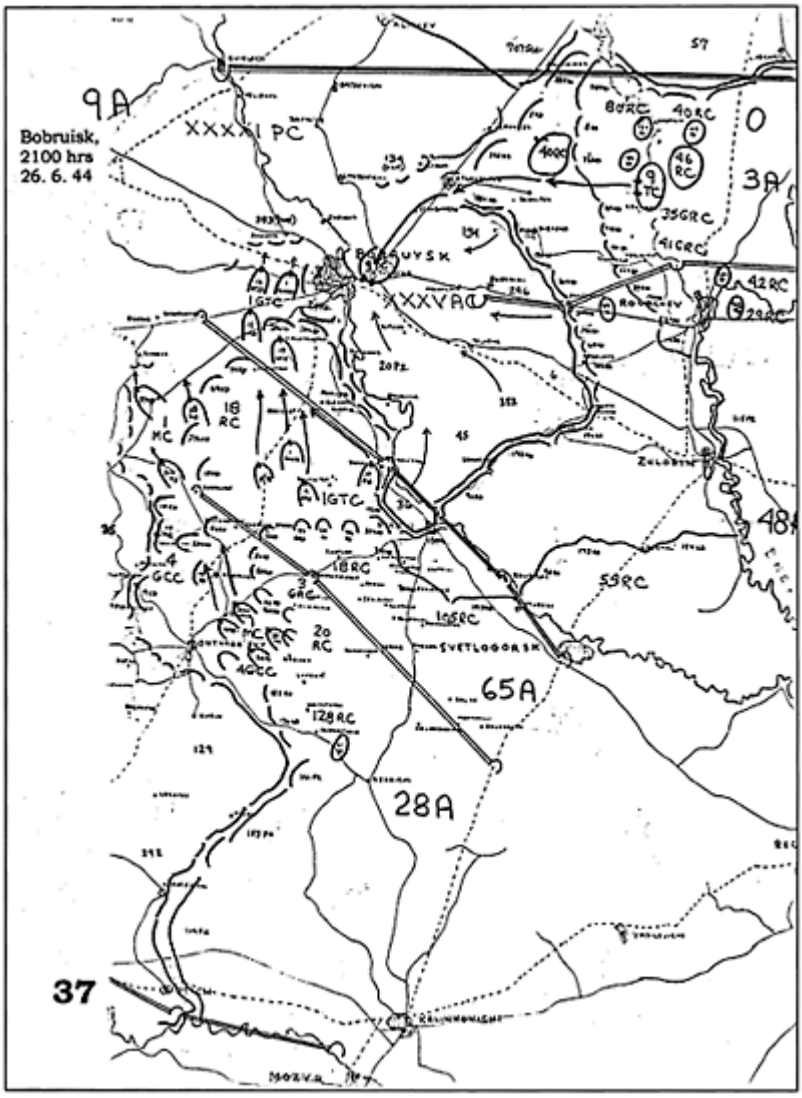
34. Situation at 2100 hrs 26.6.44



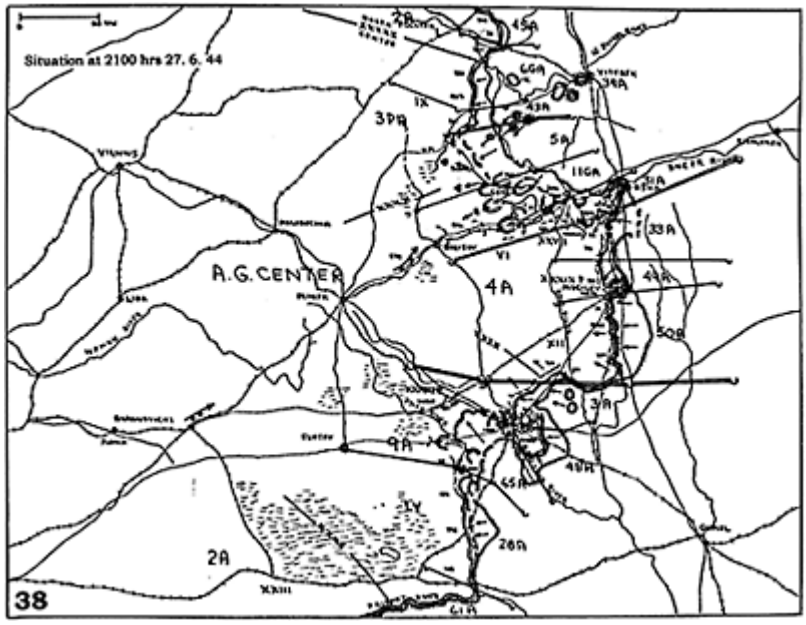
35. Vitebsk, 2100 hrs 26.6.44



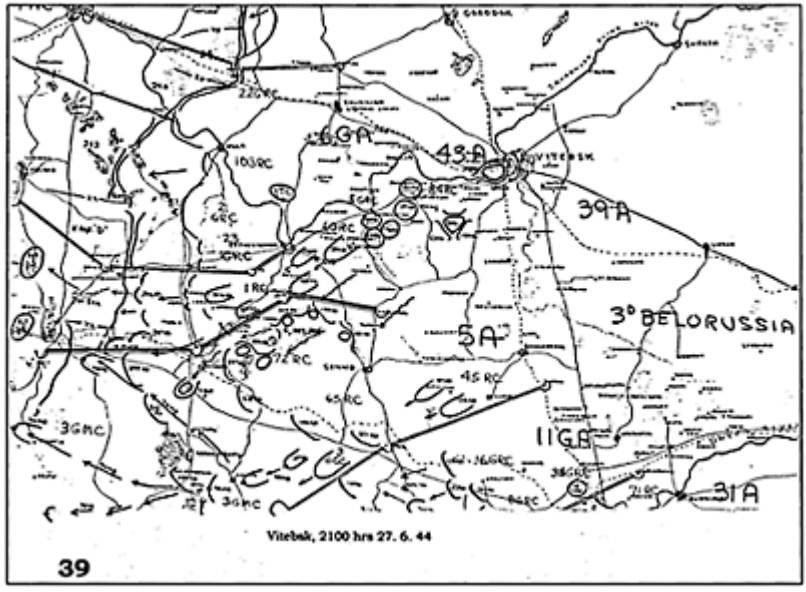
36. Orsha-Mogilev, 2100 hrs 26.6.44



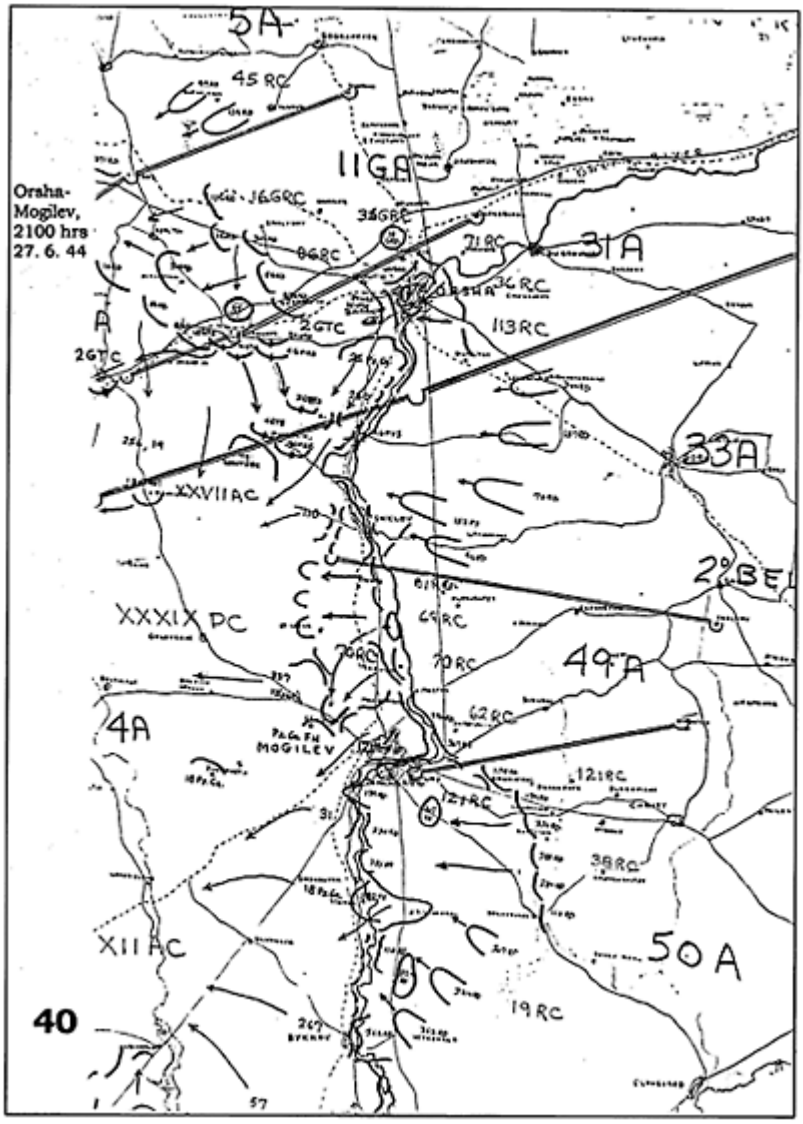
37. Bobruisk, 2100 hrs, 26.6.44



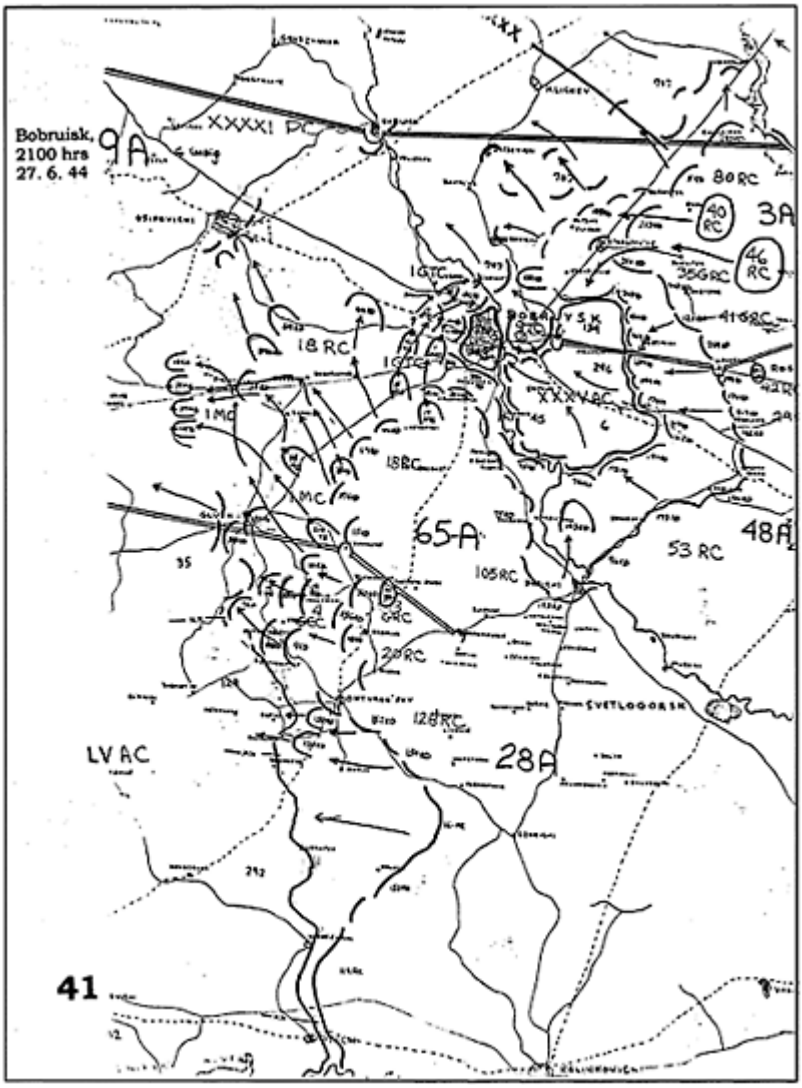
38. Situation at 2100 hrs 27.6.44



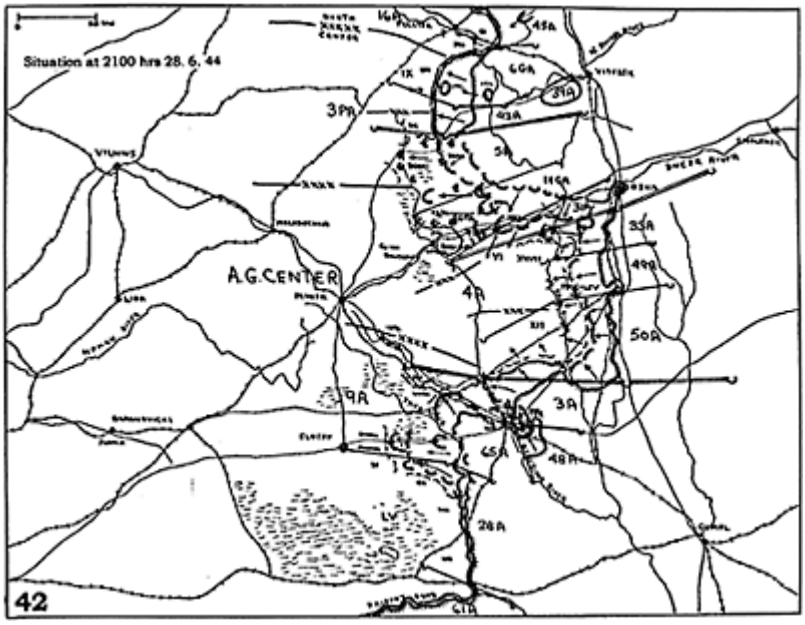
39. Vitebsk, 2100 hrs 27.6.44



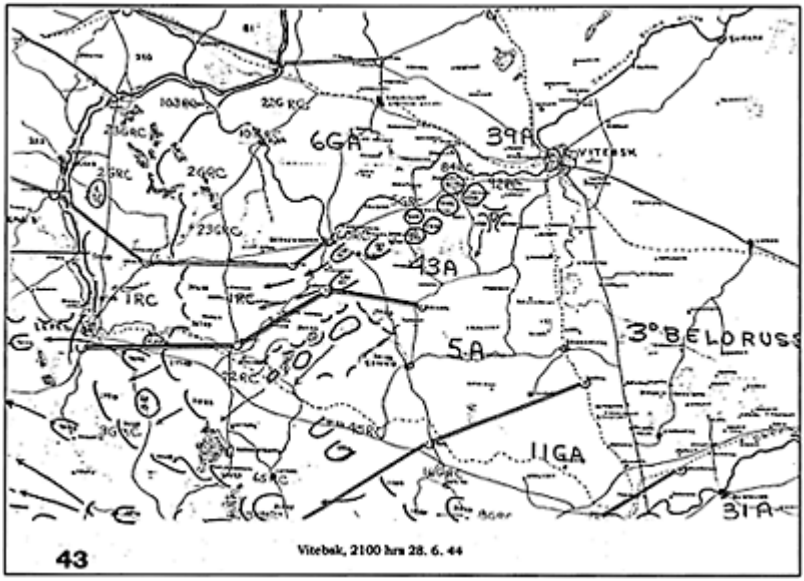
40. Orsha-Mogilev, 2100 hrs 27.6.44



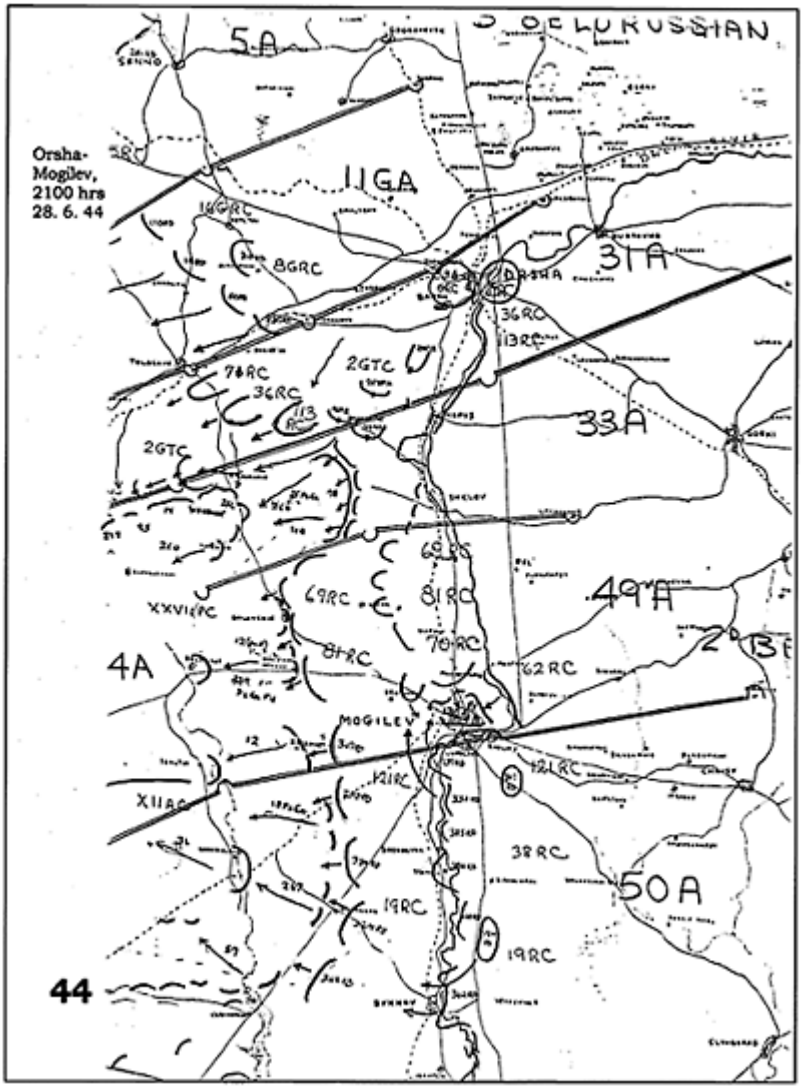
41. Bobruisk, 2100 hrs 27.6.44



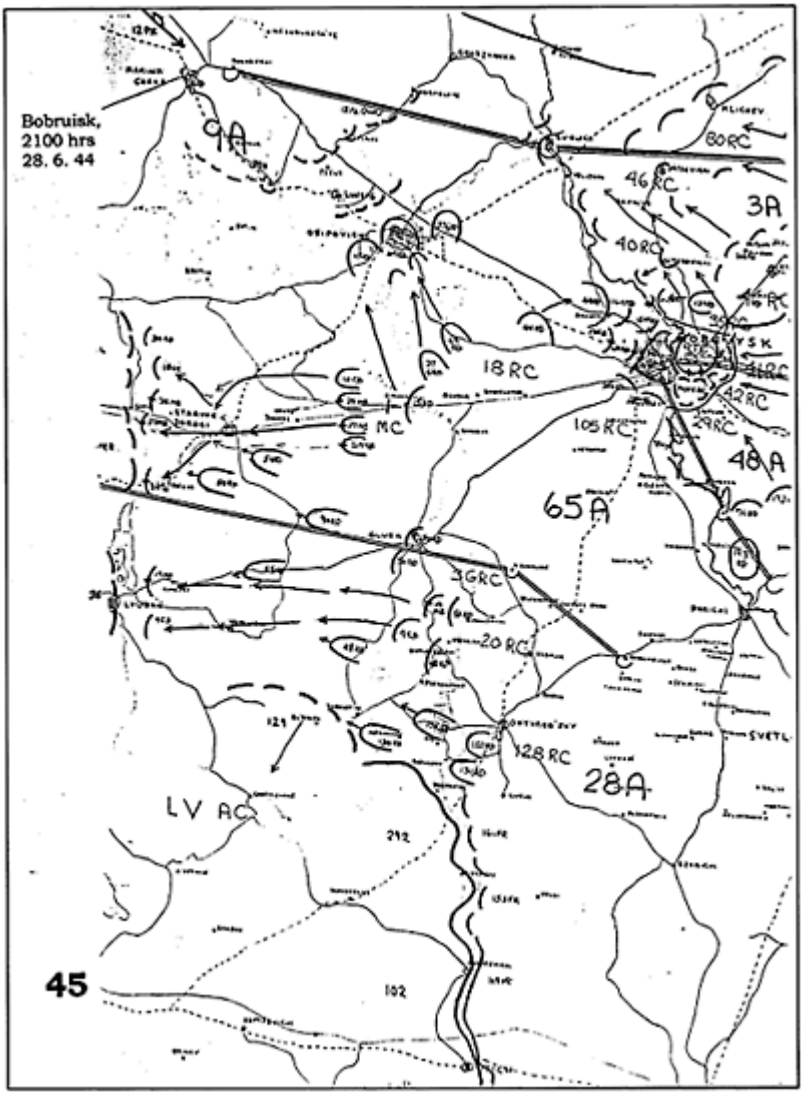
42. Situation at 2100 hrs 28.6.44



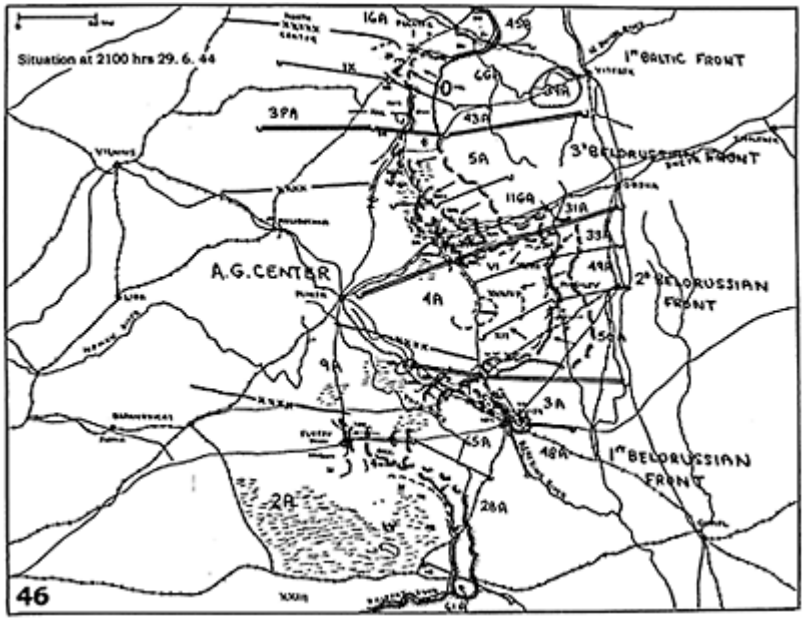
43. Vitebsk, 2100 hrs 28.6.44



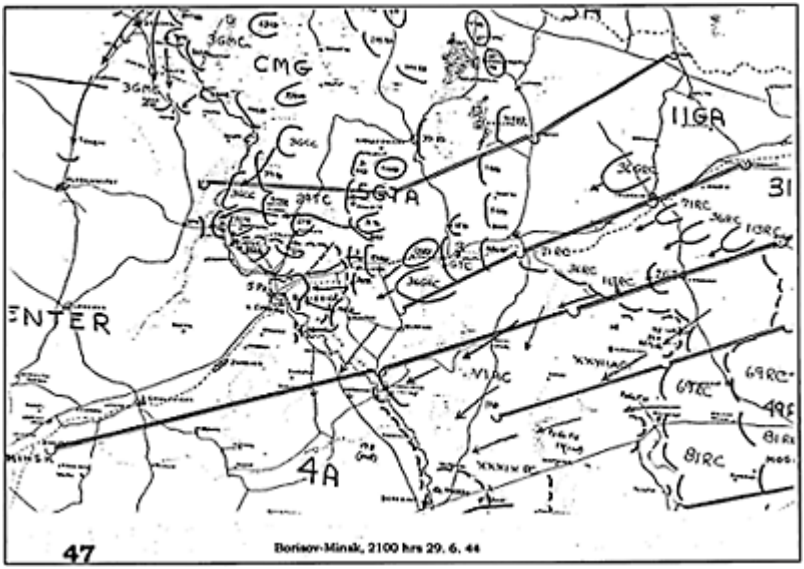
44. Orsha-Mogilev, 2100 hrs 28.6.44



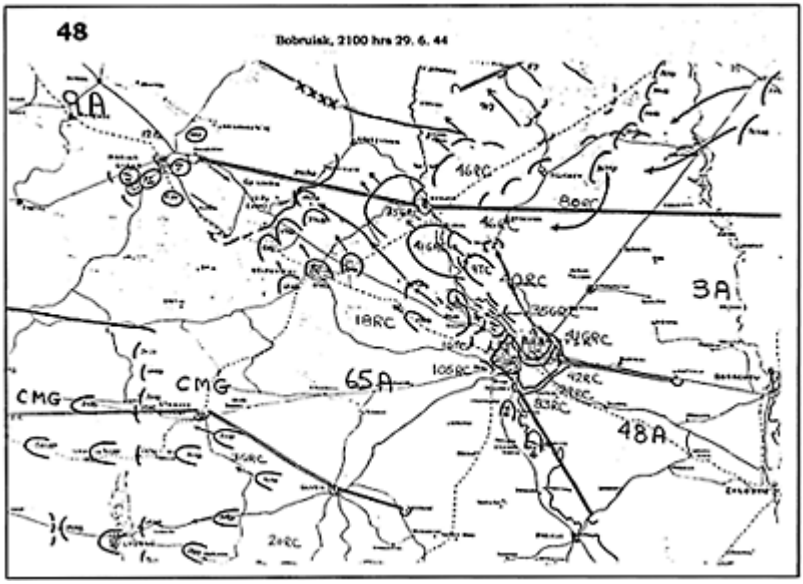
45. Bobruisk, 2100 hrs 28.6.44



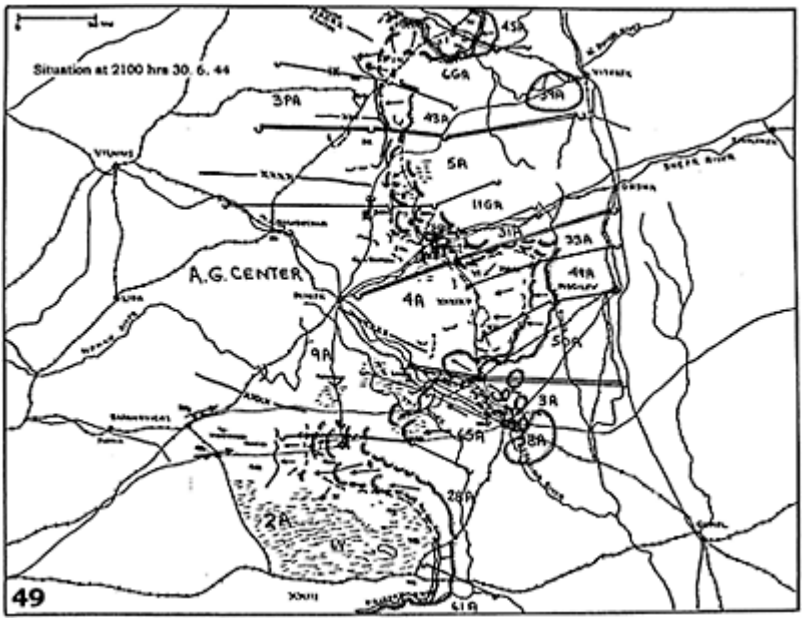
46. Situation at 2100 hrs 29.6.44



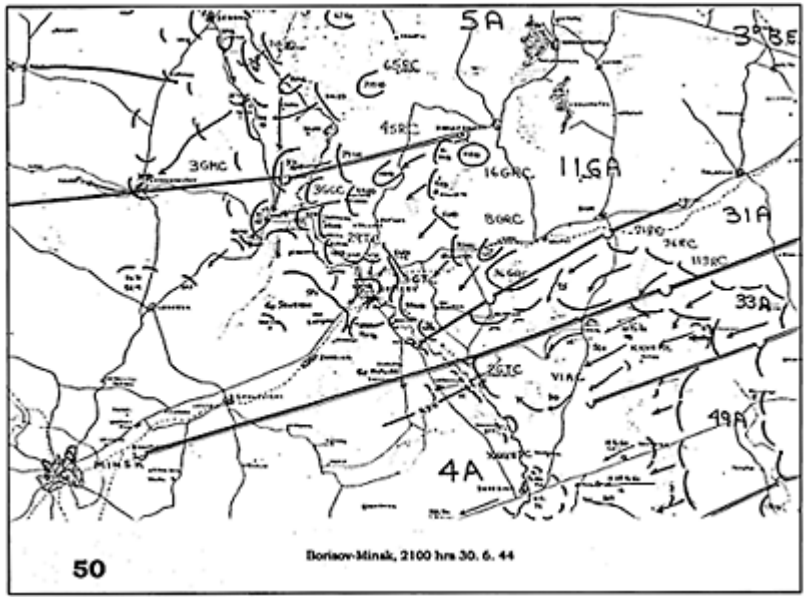
47. Borisov-Minsk, 2100 hrs 29.6.44



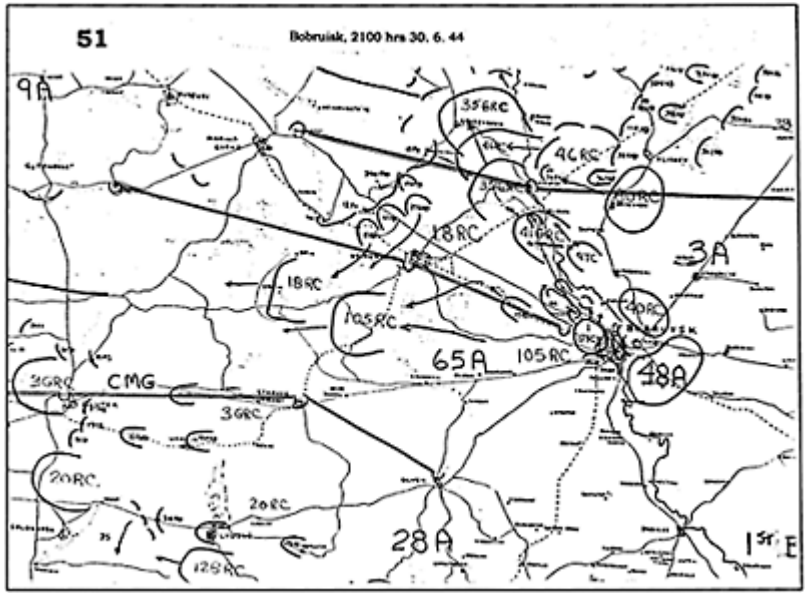
48. Bobruisk, 2100 hrs 29.6.44



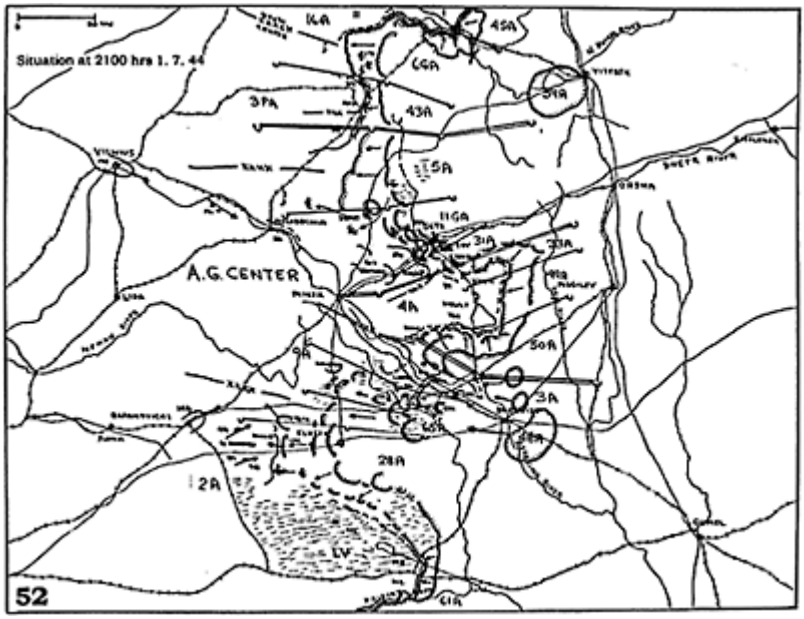
49. Situation at 2100 hrs 30.6.44



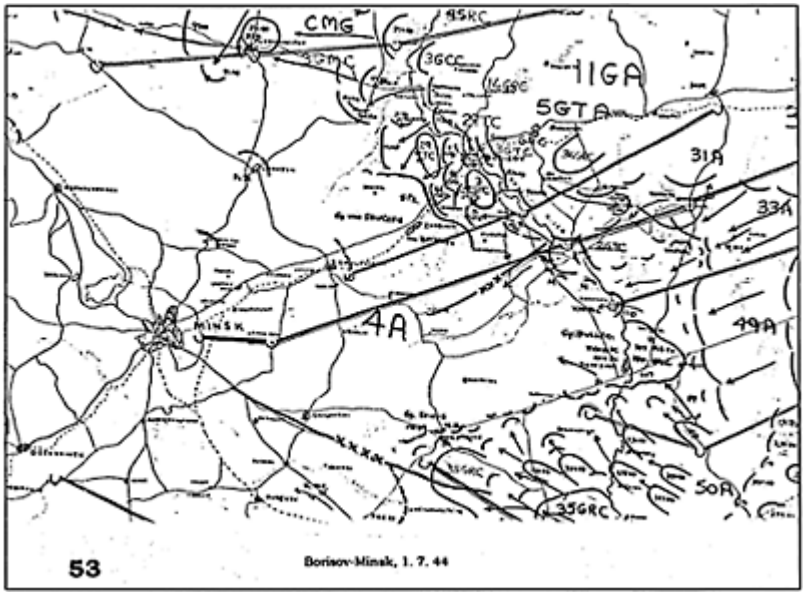
50. Borisov-Minsk, 2100 hrs 30.6.44



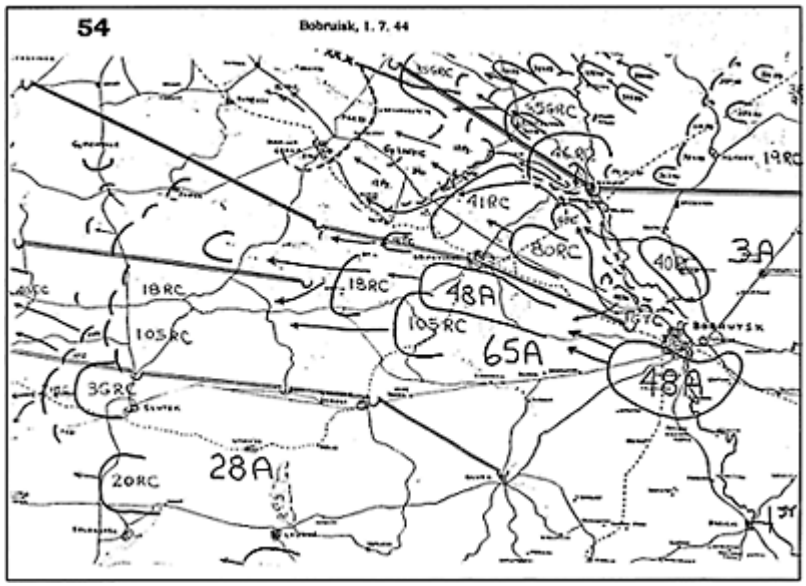
51. Bobruisk, 2100 hrs 30.6.44



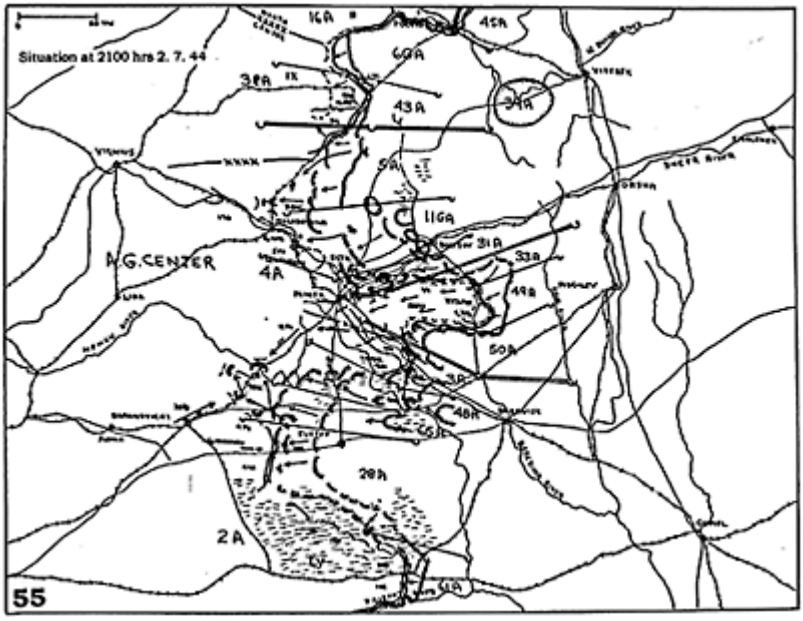
52. Situation at 2100 hrs 1.7.44



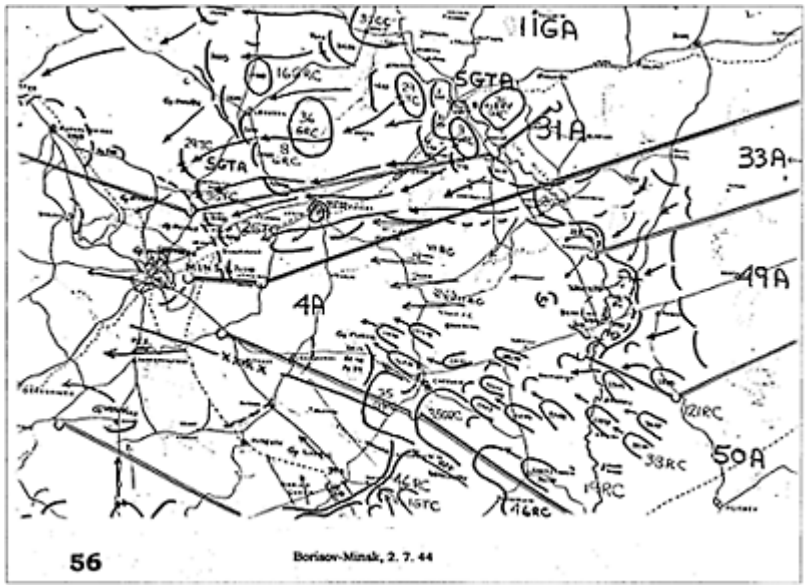
53. Borisov-Minsk, 1.7.44



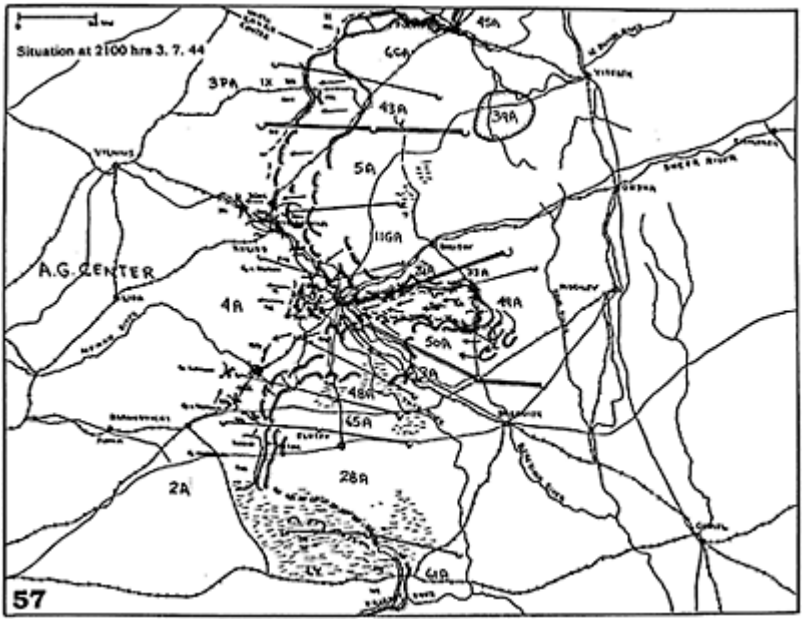
54. Bobruisk, 1.7.44



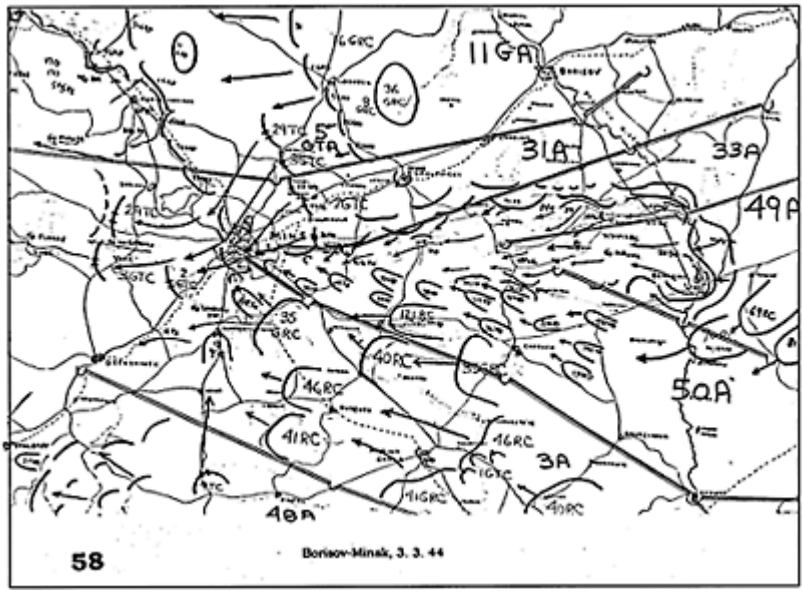
55. Situation at 2100 hrs 2.7.44



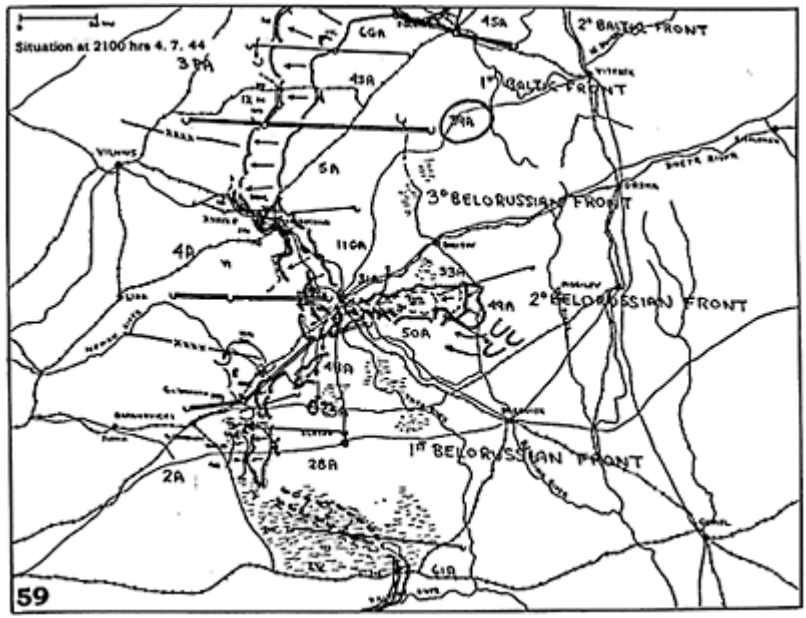
56. Borisov-Minsk, 2.7.44



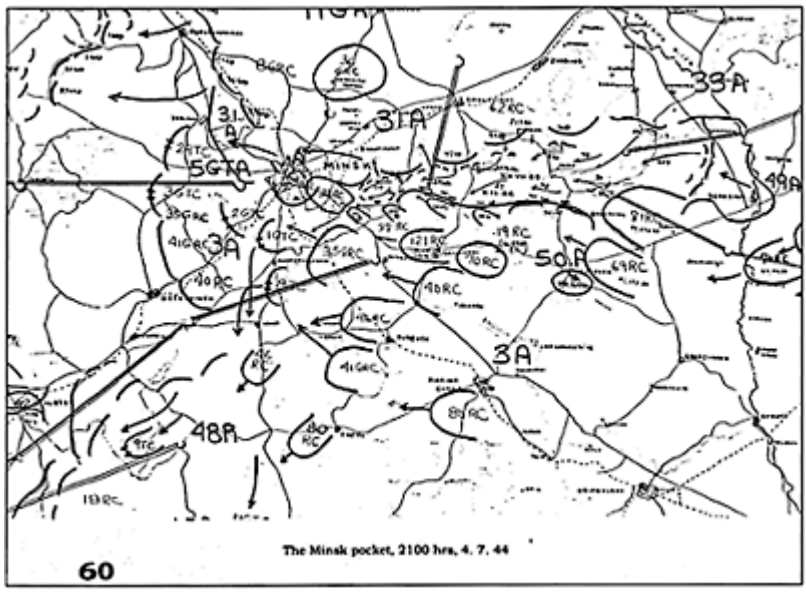
57. Situation at 2100 hrs 3.7.44



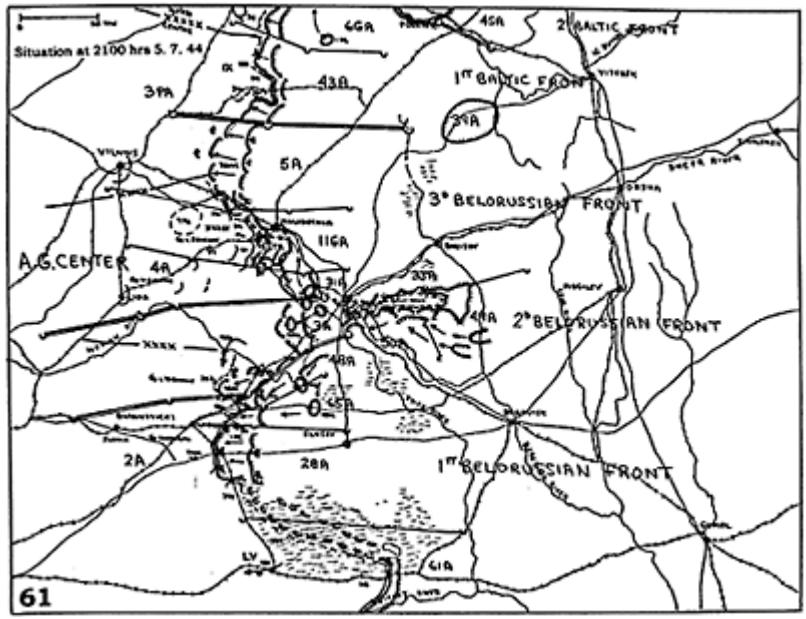
58. Borisov-Minsk, 3.7.44



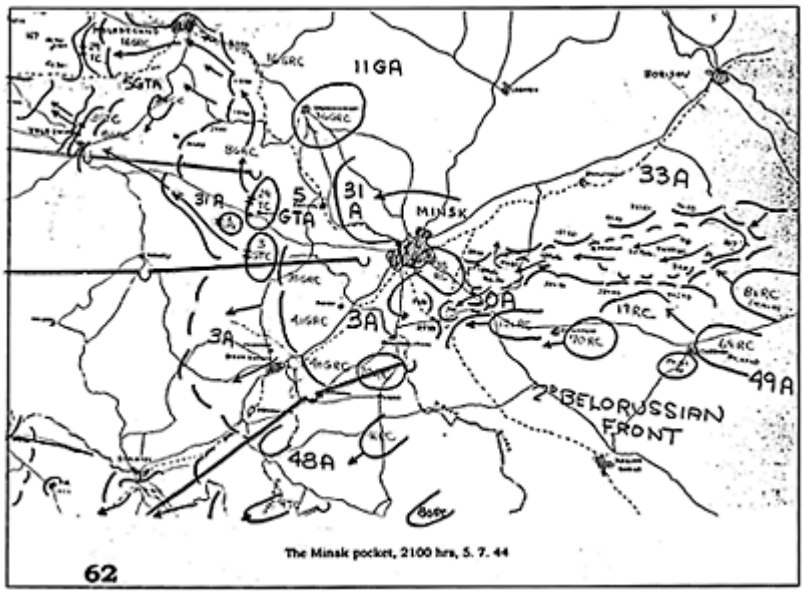
59. Situation at 2100 hrs 4.7.44



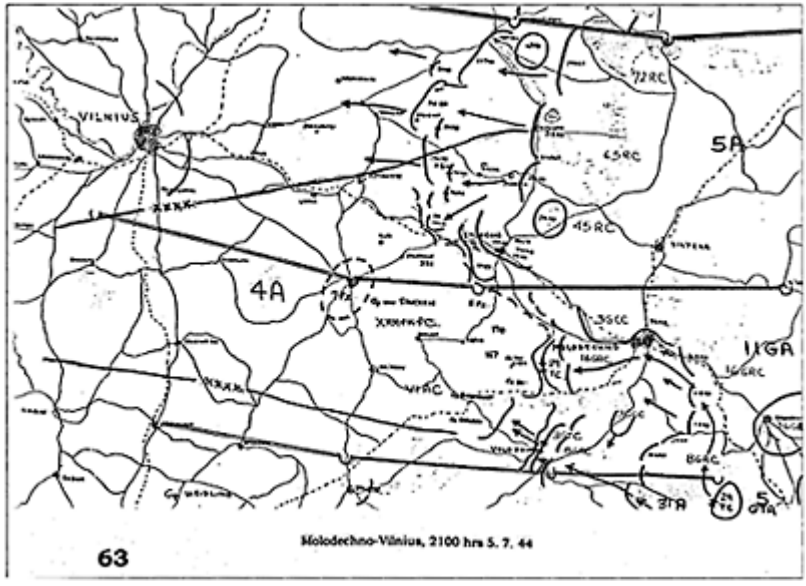
60. The Minsk pocket, 2100 hrs, 4.7.44



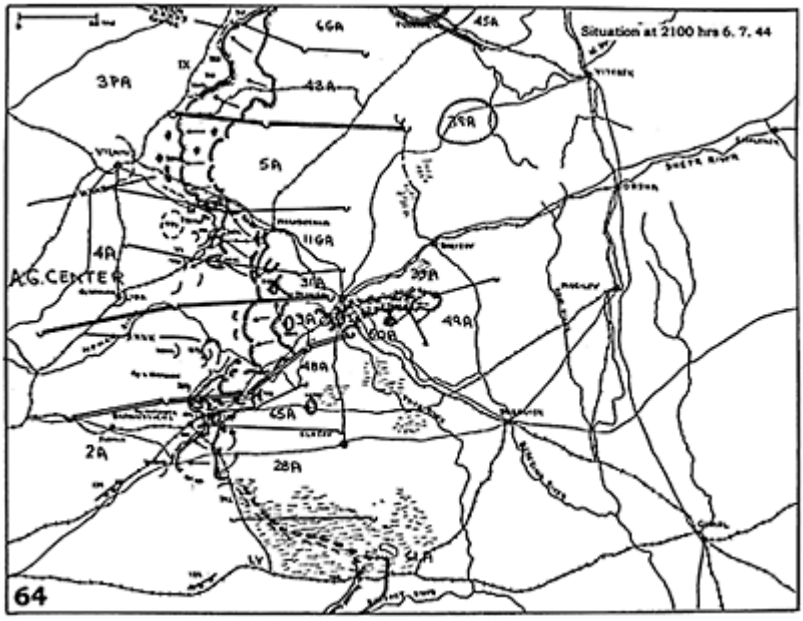
61. Situation at 2100 hrs 5.7.44



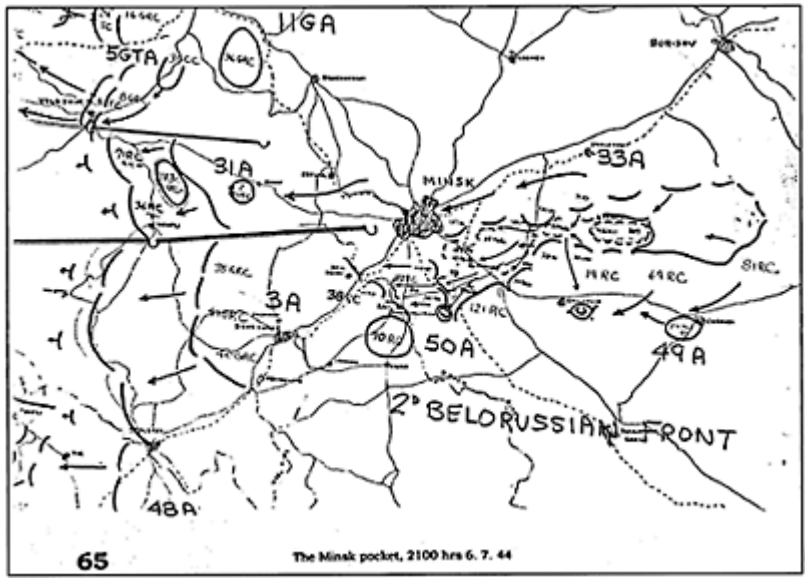
62. The Minsk pocket, 2100 hrs, 5.7.44



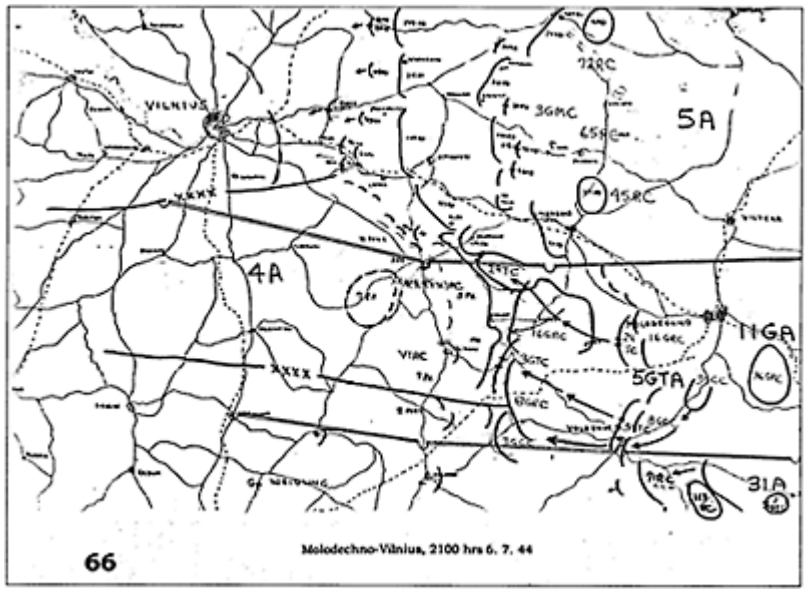
63. Molodechno-Vilnius, 2100 hrs 5.7.44



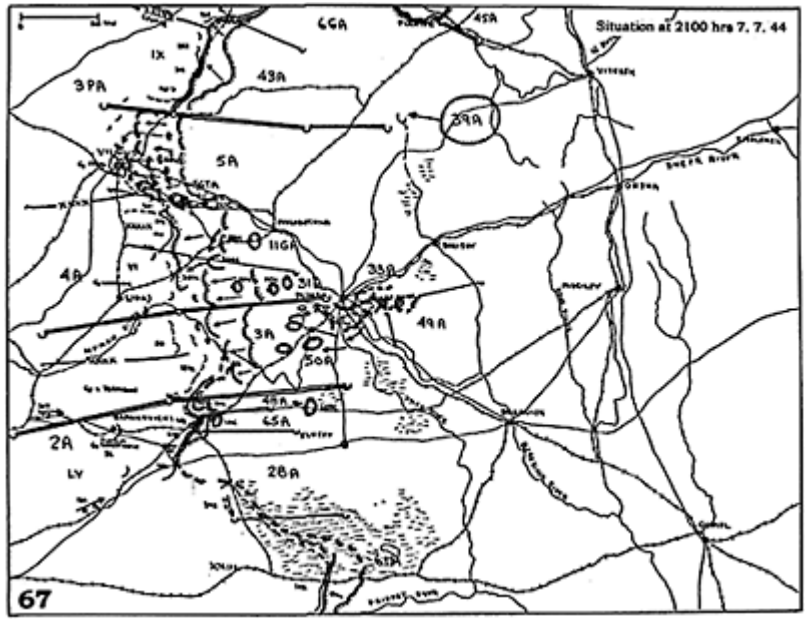
64. Situation at 2100 hrs 6.7.44



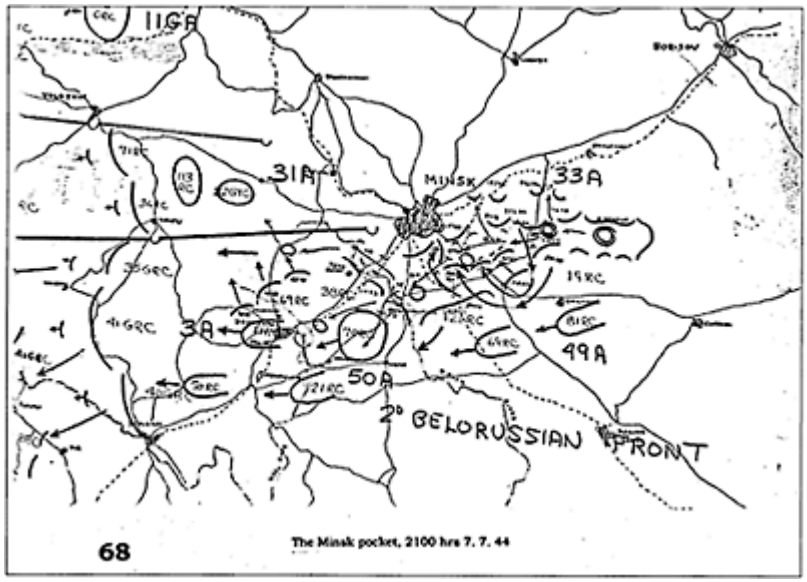
65. The Minsk pocket, 2100 hrs 6.7.44



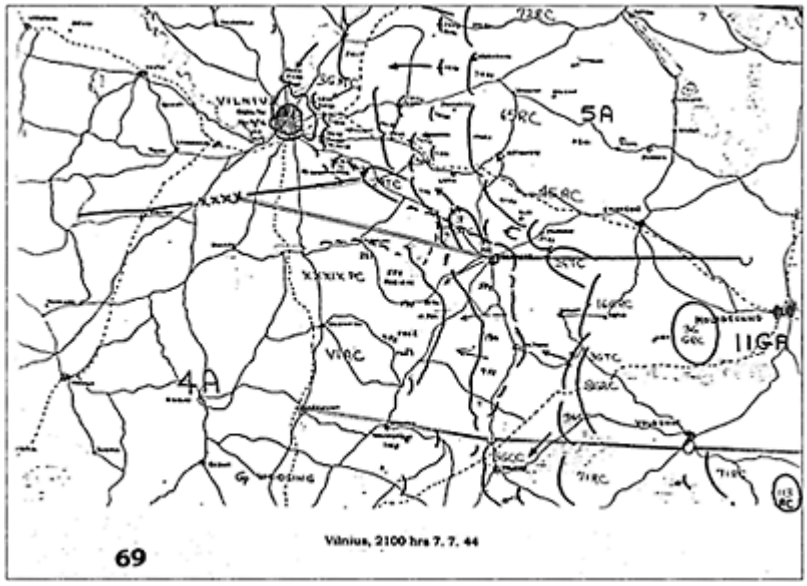
66. Molodechno-Vilnius, 2100 hrs 6.7.44



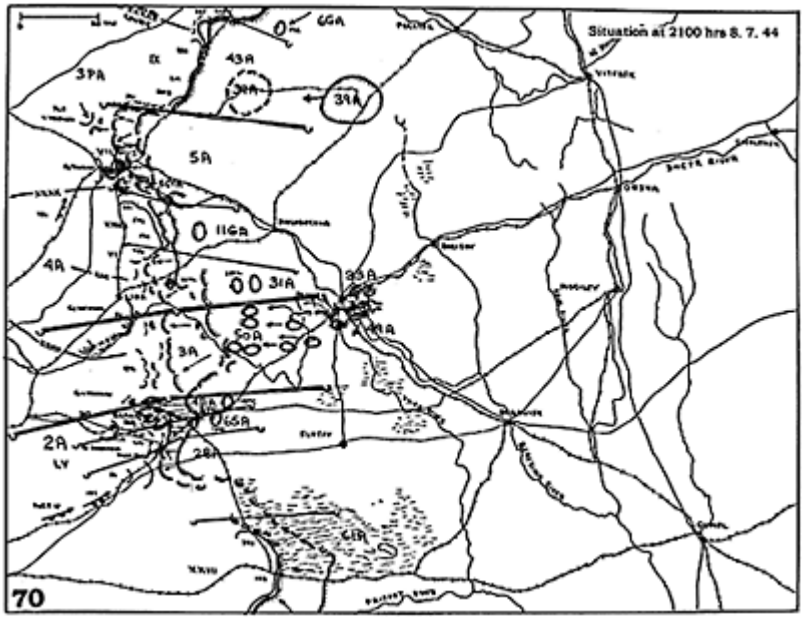
67. Situation at 2100 hrs 7.7.44



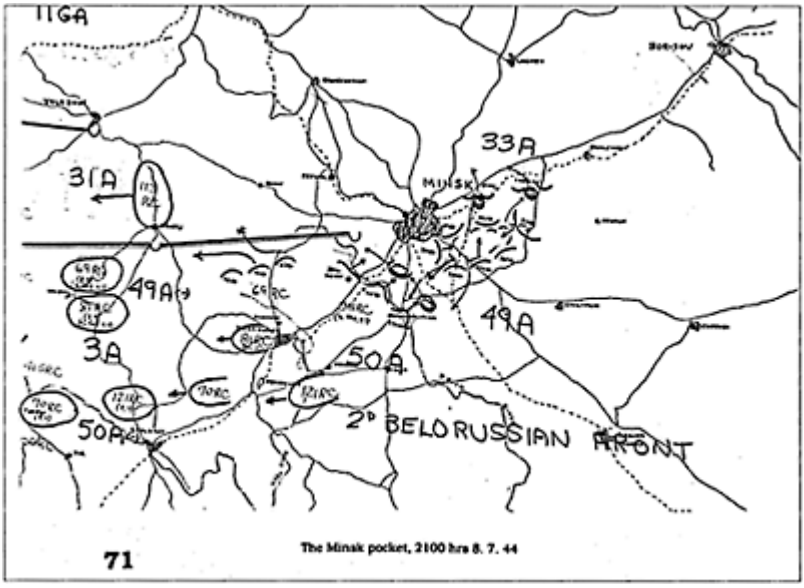
68. The Minsk pocket, 2100 hrs 7.7.44



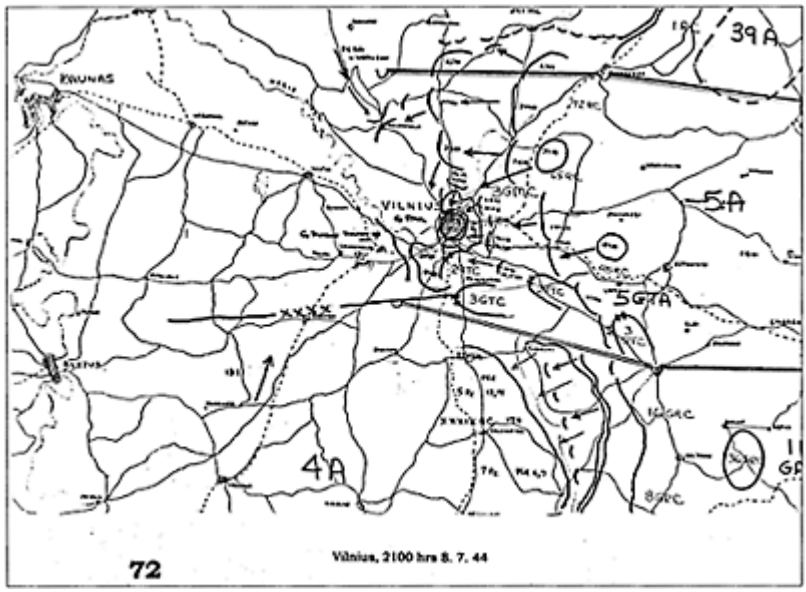
69. Vilnius, 2100 hrs 7.7.44



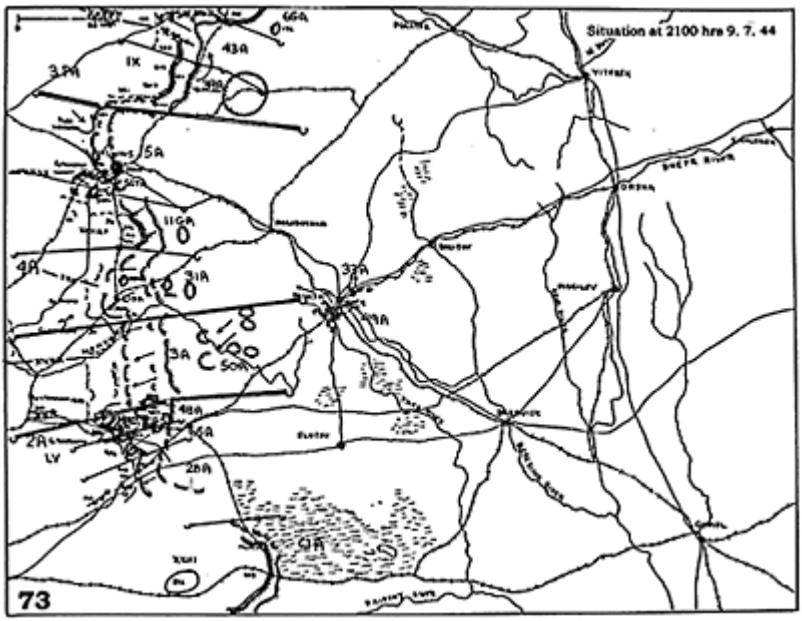
70. Situation at 2100 hrs 8.7.44



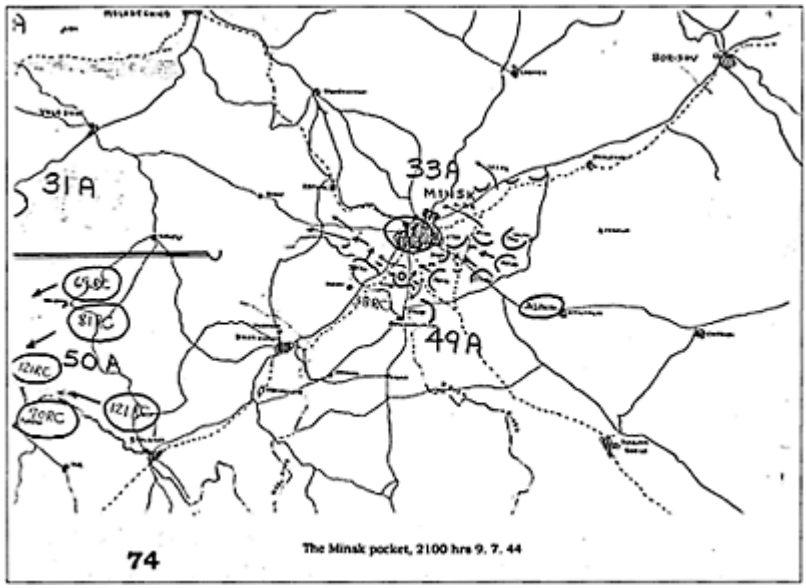
71. The Minsk pocket, 2100 hrs 8.7.44



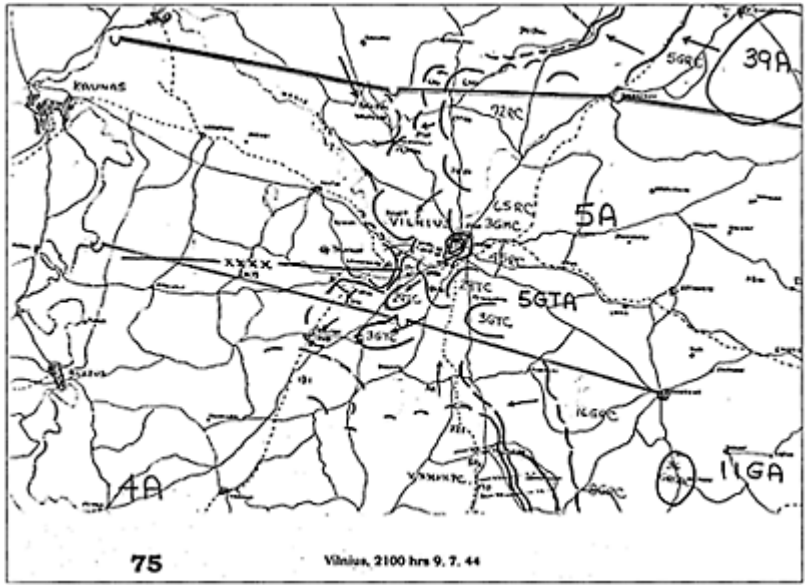
72. Vilnius, 2100 hrs 8.7.44



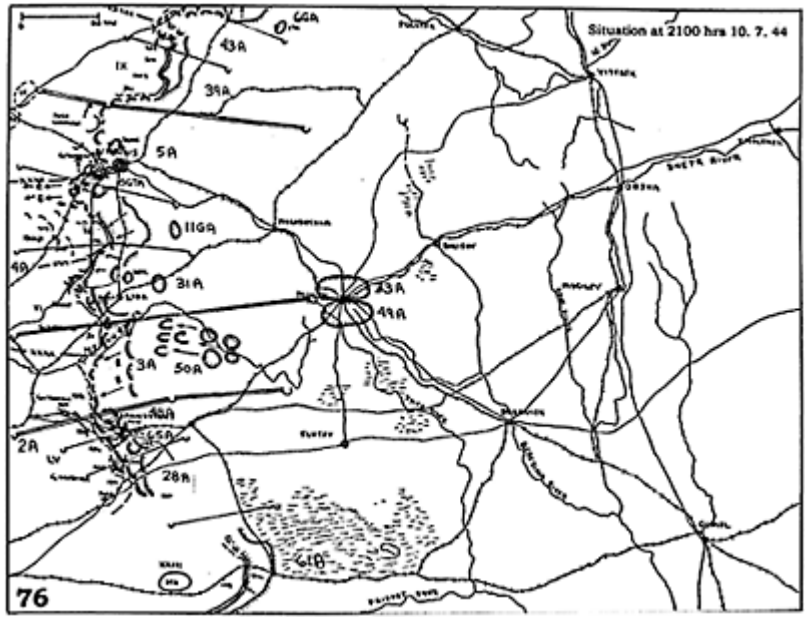
73. Situation at 2100 hrs 9.7.44



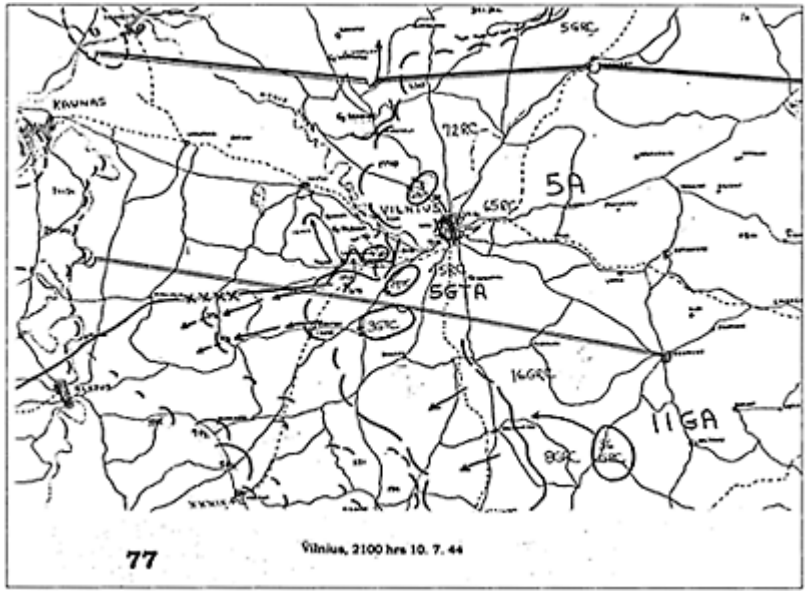
74. The Minsk pocket, 2100 hrs 9.7.44



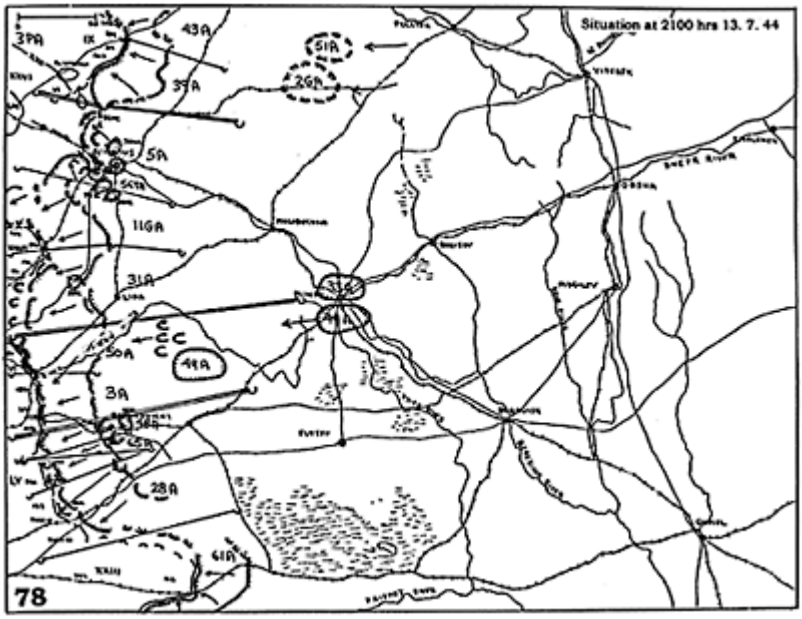
75. Vilnius, 2100 hrs 9.7.44



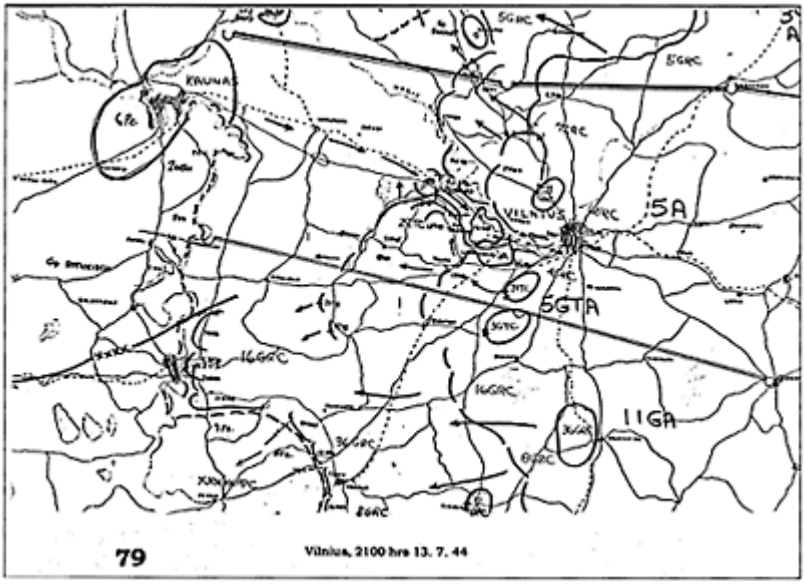
76. Situation at 2100 hrs 10.7.44



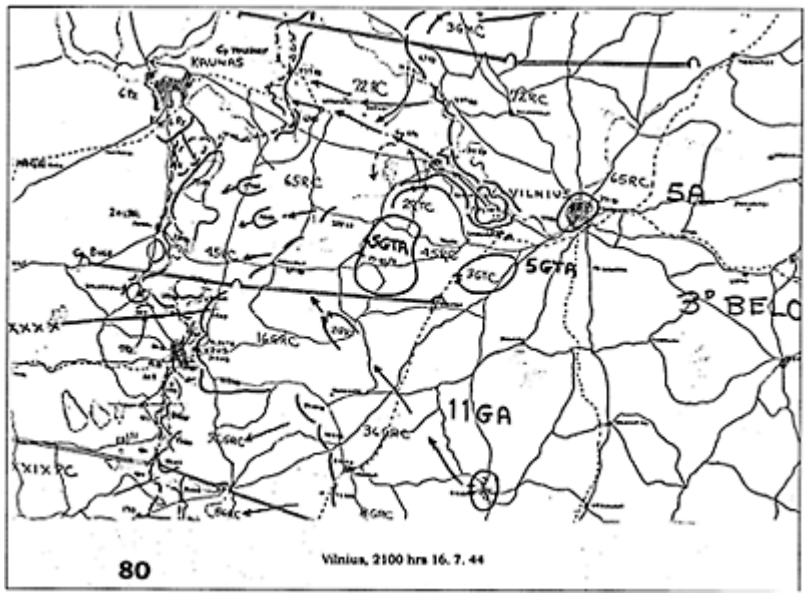
77. Vilnius, 2100 hrs 10.7.44



78. Situation at 2100 hrs 13.7.44



79. Vilnius, 2100 hrs 13.7.44



80. Vilnius, 2100 hrs 16.7.44

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